BELINDA,

OR,

THE FAIR FUGITIVE.

A NOVEL.

By Mrs. C——

DEDICATED TO

HER GRACE THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH.

Hard is the fortune which the Fair attends.

LYTT.

In TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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BELINDA.

OR,

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CHAPTER II.

MR. Mountfort was no sooner
began to consider what was
most probable his daughter could
be. It must be thought, as
her friend Lady Bellmont
he determined to enquire there
first. A servant was instantly
dispatched to Windsor. He had no

BELINDA,

OR

THE FAIR FUGITIVE.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. Mennill was no ſooner left to himſelf than he began to conſider where it was moſt probable his daughter could be. It muſt, he thought, be at her friend, Lady Sedley's, at leaſt he determined to enquire there firſt. A ſervant was inſtantly diſpatched to Windſor. He had ſo

little doubt of her being there that he felt only ſome degree of impatience for the meſſenger's return; but how was he ſhocked, ſurpriſed, and enraged, on finding when he did return that Sir James and Lady Sedley had ſet out for Scarborough ſome days ago. He was utterly confounded, nor knew what ſtep he was next to take; all now depended on mere chance; he had no clue to guide him, not the moſt diſtant idea where to enquire next, nor was it by any means a pleaſant undertaking to be thus in a manner compelled to expoſe both himſelf and his daughter. He was provoked

voked and enraged beyond all expreſſion; and repeatedly vowed if ever he did diſcover the place of her retreat ſhe ſhould dearly repent her unpardonable conduct.

"Yes, by heavens ſhe ſhall!" cried he, as he walked up and down the room in the moſt violent agitation; "all I regret is that my word is given to ſo fine a young fellow. She but ill deſerves ſo enviable a fate; were it not that I have promiſed, that my honor is ſolemnly engaged, by all that's good I would marry her to a cobler who ſhould ſoundly thraſh her bones every day of her life."

Day after day paſſed on, but no tidings could be heard of her. All their enquiries were fruitleſs; and in ſhort they were obliged to give up the point, truſting that accident might, when they leaſt expected it, do more for them than they had been able to do for themſelves.

Near a month had now paſſed ſince the day on which Mr. Mennill flattered himſelf he ſhould get quit of all his cares, by having his daughter well married. Edmond began to think it rather extraordinary that he heard nothing from either his father or brother about the affair as they had

had promiſed he ſhould; he felt a degree of impatience, mixed with a degree of hope of he knew not exactly what; he grew anxious to know how matters went on. The image of the lovely, but as he believed, the inſenſible Belinda, haunted his imagination without ceaſing. "Perhaps," he would at ſome moments fancy, "ſhe had after all refuſed Charles; 'tis moſt certain, I ſaw no ſymptoms of partiality for him in her behaviour. Yet had ſhe not conſented to be his—ſhe had—yes, even before ſhe ſaw him, her word was given. He ſighed, and wiſhed to drive her too charming

idea from his mind; he tried it, but tried in vain. Determined to know the truth as the only remedy for a paſſion his reaſon condemned, he had ſome thoughts of going once more to town; this he gave up—he would next write to Charles—no, he feared truſting his pen on the ſubject to him. At laſt, unable to conquer a curioſity for which he could not account to his own ſatisfaction, he reſolved to write to a friend of his then in London, to whom he could do it, and make what enquiries he pleaſed without any ſcruple. They were pretty regular correſpondents; indeed he was

at

at that very time wondering he had not lately heard from him. Next morning was ſet apart for this purpoſe; but before the day was at an end the following letter was brought him from that very friend.

EDWARD WHARTON, ESQ.

TO

EDMOND MAYNARD, ESQ.

I know you have for ſome time, Edmond, been *looking upon*, if not very civilly *calling* me a lazy idle fellow. Appearances I confeſs are rather againſt me: but you are not to learn, they are not

not always to be truſted, ſo let that ſuffice at preſent: inſtead of a detail of the whys and wherefores, I have other matters to treat you with more to my taſte and your's too I hope.

— Pray has Charles, that pink of puppyiſm, yet ſent you a ſummons to attend his nuptials?—in your laſt you told me you daily expected it. Lay aſide thoſe fruitleſs expectations, Edmond. Oh I have ſo joyous a tale to unfold, could I but hope to do it even common juſtice, as will ſerve you to laugh at every day of your life, were you to live to the age of Methuſalem. The town is

ringing

ringing with it; but you have no doubt heard of it; you muſt, and I have of courſe loſt the joy of making you die with laughing. However, upon a ſuppoſition that you may not, here goes.

The day of days was fixed—Miſs, as the world ſays, had, during the whole courſe of the negociation, been rather refractory or ſo; but that was got over: the day, as I was telling you, was fixed.

Charles and his father, dreſſed *a marvielle* no doubt, and *bien poudree*, ſtepped into their carriage elate with hope and all the other pleaſant ſenſations an affair of this nature

nature muſt naturally give riſe to, and drove to the temple of his divinity; two or three other friends were alſo invited to accompany the happy pair to church; his ſaid divinity had not, it was conjectured, finiſhed the labours of her toilet when the bridegroom arrived. He caſt his wiſhing eyes around, but found not the object they were in ſearch of.

Mr. Mennill ſaw, and felt for him; he rung the bell. "Let your young lady know," *quoth he*, "we are impatient for the favour of her company;" or words I preſume to that effect.

They waited—again they waited

—no

—no Miſs Mennill. Again the bell was rung; half a dozen male and female ſervants popped their heads into the room all at once looking like ſo many ghoſts, pale, quakeing, quivering, and almoſt ſpeechleſs, with terror—their young lady was not to be found!

Edmond, my dear Edmond, can you, is it in nature to fancy a more joyous ſcene of confuſion than that which followed this extraordinary intelligence. Do not flatter yourſelf with hopes that I mean to deſcribe it; I know the extent of my talents rather better than that comes to.

"Not

"Not to be found!" exclaimed one.

"Not to be found?" ſcreamed another.

"No, not to be found," cried the croaking meſſengers; "we cannot open Miſs Belinda's room door, and therefore conclude ſome miſchief has happened; indeed, indeed, Sir, pleaſe your honors, we fear ſhe has made away with herſelf as the ſaying is."

"Confound your ugly faces," cried her father, "and is this all; and ſo becauſe Miſs Mennill choſe to lock her door, you choſe to give us this curſed alarm. Get out of my ſight this moment,

or

or I'll make away with every ſoul of ye, as the ſaying is."

I will not ſwear, Edmond, this was exactly the dialogue that paſſed on the ever memorable occaſion, but of courſe ſomething like it.

In ſhort, up they all flew, or hobbled, according to their abilities in point of ſpeed; knocked, called, ſcreamed—no anſwer;—ſtared—looked aghaſt on each other—made away with herſelf, as the ſaying is, occurred to them—horrid—yet not ſingular—rather ſo indeed for a young lady. The door was now forced open; the bird

bird was flown, actually flown, Edmond; nor have they yet been able with all their wits to diſcover to what corner of this habitable globe ſhe has taken her flight.

And ſo ends my ſtory. I leave you to make your own comments on this delectable hiſtory, Edmond. I have laughed 'till I am weary—think of that firſt of all puppies, that brother of your's being the HERO upon ſuch an occaſion. How I enjoy the fellow's mortification, and adore the girl's ſpirit.

If I am not miſtaken, I think you wrote me you had ſeen Belinda, and that ſhe was handſome.

Suppoſe

Suppoſe you were to carry her off—what a triumph; but where to find her?—aye, there's the rub, Edmond. Do prithee leave your ſhady groves and purling ſtreams, and come to town; I ſhall remain here a month longer at leaſt; do come, and let us have a joyous laugh together about this ridiculous ſtory.

I hear Charles does not give up the point—her father ſwears ſhe ſhall yet be his in ſpite of men and devils. They forget the damſel is probably long before this time the lawful property of another; my life for it, ſhe did not eſcape from one lover but to fly

fly to another more to her taſte. But come to town, and let us ſee how the buſineſs will end—do order your boots and ſet off.

Your's,

EDWARD WHARTON.

I leave my readers to imagine what an effect this letter produced in the mind of Edmond. He was breathleſs with impatience to get to the end of it, and when he had done ſo, ſcarce knew a word that was in it diſtinctly. Again he read it, nor could even then credit his ſenſes—a thouſand hopes, a thouſand

a thouſand fears by turns took poſſeſſion of him. He knew his friend's lively imagination, and that he embelliſhed every ſtory he told by his facetious manner in relating it. Ignorant how deeply he was intereſted in it, he had probably exaggerated the circumſtances, nay perhaps put ſuch a finiſhing ſtroke to it, as he, in the gaiety of his heart, thought *it ought* to have had, inſtead of that it had in *reality*.

One moment he reſolved to ſet off for London, and the next, ſaw it could anſwer no purpoſe, ſince the lovely Miſs Mennill was not to be found there; he then determined

determined to write to Wharton, entreating him to enquire minutely into the affair, and to learn the real ſtate of the caſe; but above all whether it was generally believed ſhe was gone off with another. This plan he thought moſt adviſable, and inſtantly put it in execution.

TO EDWARD WHARTON, ESQ.

Your moſt aſtoniſhing letter, my dear Wharton, has raiſed ſuch a tumult in my breaſt that I am more than half diſtracted—you will ſtare; and readily believe me by this beginning ſo very contrary

to

to what you no doubt expected. My ideas are in ſuch a ſtate of perplexity and confuſion, that I find it impoſſible to explain myſelf ſo clearly as I wiſh.

Suffice it to ſay, that I love, I adore Miſs Mennill—judge then what are my feelings at this moment. You are not deceived, Edward; I did write to you that ſhe was handſome, but that was ſaying little.

On my going with my father and brother to pay my reſpects to her, as one whom they aſſured me was in a few days to be his wife, I found her not merely handſome—had that been her only perfection

perfection, never ſhould I have envied his fate; but ſhe is lovely beyond all power of expreſſion; her form angelic; her voice, her manner—all, all formed to captivate the moſt inſenſible heart. I paſſed one whole day in her engaging company—what a day—what could I think—I knew it was the firſt on which ſhe had ſeen Charles, this he had told me. Yet ſhe had conſented to be his. I had my father's, I had his word for it; what could I think, I ſay, but that charming as ſhe appeared her heart was abſolutely a ſtranger to every ſentiment of delicacy; my reaſon condemned her; but my

heart,

heart, my eyes, my every ſenſe rebelled againſt its dictates, and I left her in a ſituation of mind more painful than my greateſt enemy could have wiſhed me; firmly perſuaded ſhe was to give her hand to my brother, I fled. I hoped abſence and cool reflection would convince me ſhe *could not*, with the ſentiments I had ſuch apparent reaſon to aſcribe to her, be the amiable creature ſhe appeared, and never ſure did woman appear more enchantingly ſo than ſhe did. I fled from the too charming object, Edward, in hopes to regain the peace I had ſo fatally loſt. How I ſhould have

ſucceeded

ſucceeded I know not; but your letter gives me reaſon to believe the wound has been deeper than then I imagined; a gleam of hope has rekindled the flame I wiſhed to ſmother; yet I will not ſwear I had even got ſo far as to *wiſh it.*

Thus you have, my dear Edward, in return for your hiſtory, that of my heart. Need I ſay more, or can you gueſs that I depend on you for a more particular account of this, to me, intereſting revolution.

Make it your buſineſs, as you value my peace, to learn the truth, and let me inſtantly hear from you. 'Till then I leave you to imagine

imagine the condition I shall be in: a thousand hopes, *ten* thousand fears, will by turns agitate the heart of your

EDMOND MAYNARD.

CHAP-

CHAPTER X.

LEAVING Edmond to his own reflections, impatiently waiting for a ſecond letter from his friend, let us now ſay a few words concerning his brother.

The diſappointment he had met with was a ſevere blow on more accounts than one: Such was, however, the happy portion of vanity he poſſeſſed, that he was leſs mortified by it than any other man 'tis probable would have been;

been; for he very wiſely ſet it down to the lady's want of taſte and diſcernment; but tho' his vanity was not much hurt, his paſſions were—his paſſions I ſay, becauſe his heart had no more feeling or ſenſibility than a flint; but he admired her perſon, and would have given all he was worth to poſſeſs it; yet there was a ſtill greater cauſe for curſing his ſtars, as he perpetually did moſt heroically—this was the loſs of her fortune—his finances were in a moſt deplorable ſtate; over head and ears in debt. In ſpite of his father's blind partiality he had not courage to let him into the

true ſtate of his affairs; one circumſtance there was indeed he had ſcarcely courage even to think of it himſelf; but bad as it was, he flattered himſelf it would not riſe up in judgment againſt him, till he by ſome fortunate ſtroke or other, found himſelf in a ſituation to ſettle it in ſuch a manner that ſhould give him no farther trouble. He had Mr. Mennill's promiſe that his lovely daughter ſhould ſtill be his could ſhe but be found, and he looked upon it as a folly to ſuppoſe ſhe would not ſooner or later. With this flattering hope, day after day went

went on, but no accounts could be obtained.

Charles was one evening ſtroling home, after having paſſed it with a party of his gay companions at a tavern, when as he walked on he obſerved two ill looking fellows attempting to rob a gentleman at the corner of the ſtreet he had juſt turned into. He inſtantly ſtruck at one of them before he had time to ſee who gave the blow; it made him ſtagger; the other now ſaw him, and took to his heels, his companion following as faſt as he could. The gentleman whom they had knocked down was not ſo much hurt as

Charles feared, yet had received a very ſevere blow on his temple. He got up and expreſſed his gratitude for the favour ſo kindly done him in his thus coming to his aſſiſtance, but found himſelf rather giddy by the blow. Charles offered him his arm; the gentleman thanked him, while accepting it, ſaying he had not fifty yards to go, and begged he would do him the favor to ſtop into his houſe that he might have an opportunity not only more fully to expreſs his gratitude, but alſo to know to whom he was ſo much obliged. In a few moments they reached the door; they both

went

went in; but imagine if you can, my fair reader, what was Charles's aſtoniſhment to find two ladies ſitting engaged in chat, one of whom was no other than Miſs Mennill. He ſtarted — Belinda turned pale as death, and exclaimed—" good heavens, what do I ſee? Mr. Maynard!"—and had nearly fainted, ſo unſpeakable was her ſurpriſe on ſeeing the man of all others ſhe leaſt wiſhed to ſee introduced by Sir James Sedley.

Her friend ſtood petrified with aſtoniſhment in hearing Miſs Mennill name him, nor was Sir James leſs ſo. All the precautions they

had hitherto taken to prevent her being diſcovered were in a moment rendered abortive by this unlucky accident; for ſome moments they all ſtood ſilent, unable to expreſs the various emotions this ſtrange event had produced; the ladies eagerly gazing on Sir James, expecting an explanation, ſince it was impoſſible *they* could gueſs that mere chance was alone to blame for what had unfortunately happened.

At laſt Charles, who certainly had leaſt reaſon to be *diſconcerted*, however ſurpriſed, cried—"was ever man ſo bleſſed, thus to find, when leaſt expected, the lovely object,

object, whoſe cruel flight has rendered me from that diſtracting moment the moſt wretched of human beings; ah do not, do not, my charming Miſs Mennill, damp my preſent joy by thoſe killing frowns, that forbidding coldneſs; did you but know what your adoring Charles has ſuffered you would not thus———"

"I beg, Mr. Maynard," cried Belinda, interrupting him, "you will ſpare yourſelf the trouble of attempting to deſcribe ſufferings which I am pretty certain you neither *do*, nor are *capable* of feeling. Had you that tender regard for me, you ridiculouſly pre-

tend, would you, as you have done, thus have drawn on me a father's diſpleaſure? no, Sir; a man of ſentiment, a man of any delicacy, would ſcorn to owe the hand of the woman he *adored*, as you affect to call it, to parental authority only; how you have contrived to gain ſo great a ſhare of *his* favor, you beſt know; but give me leave to aſſure you *mine* you *never can.*"

"Cruel Miſs Mennill," replied Charles, "thus to doubt the ſincerity of a paſſion fervent as ever warmed the breaſt of man; your father's partiality does me honor; I glory in it, and ſhould think I

but

but ill deſerved the place you reproach me for having gained in his eſteem and friendſhip, could I be weak enough to reſign the invaluable treaſure he encourages me to purſue, and which he has generouſly promiſed ſhall be mine."

"The *treaſure* moſt dear to you, Mr. Maynard, he has my free conſent to beſtow upon you whenever he thinks proper," anſwered Belinda; "but you are moſt egregiouſly deceived if you fancy even the authority of a father ſhall have power to give you my hand with it."

Sir James finding there was no probability that an amicable end

would be put to this unexpected interview, now addreſſed himſelf to Charles, ſaying—" tho' chance, Mr. Maynard, has laid me under an obligation to you, and tho' no perſon can be more ſenſible of it than I acknowledge myſelf to be, yet I muſt take the liberty to remind you that it grows late," looking at his watch. " Miſs Mennill is flurried—her health may ſuffer—you now, Sir, know where to find her at a proper hour."

He rung the bell. A ſervant appeared.

" Would you have a chair called, Mr. Maynard? I would offer you my

my carriage, but fear it will detain you too long before it can be got ready."

Charles bowed his thanks and declined accepting either. Again he made an attempt to soften the heart of his lovely miſtreſs; but finding it in vain, was compelled to take his leave, fully determined to go inſtantly and acquaint her father with this joyful diſcovery. He flew to Portland Place; but how was he mortified when informed Mr. Mennill was not yet come home; did they know where he was to be found? he aſked—they did not, was the anſwer. He was half out of his wits at this

this unlucky accident. He next went to the coffee houſe he generally uſed, with no better ſucceſs. The fact was, Mr. Mennill was gone to dine with a friend at Blackheath very unexpectedly, and did not return till the following evening; Charles in the mean time running in ſearch of him from one end of the town to the other till day light.

While he was thus employed, Miſs Mennill and her friends held a haſty conſultation what ſteps they were next to take. She found by Mr. Maynard's converſation, he was ſtill encouraged by

by her father, and in no humour to give her up: to return home then would be to run into certain misery, and to remain where she was would come to the same thing, since her father would of course force her to do so the moment he knew where she was. To prevent this there was not an instant to be lost—it was now past twelve o'clock.

"Order the post chaise," cried Lady Sedley, after a pause of a few minutes; "my dear Sir James, 'tis a fine moon light night; I will, as soon as it can possibly be got ready, convey the dear girl to Oakhill Farm, tis not thirty miles from

from London, we may reach it in a few hours. I can depend upon my old friends there; they will be proud and happy to render every thing agreeable to her. Their daughter is a good creature, and will play the part of an Abigail mighty well. I can be back here by dinner to-morrow, and have an hour or two's reſt into the bargain; when I return, you and I, my dear Sir James, will conſider what reception we are to give to thoſe who come in queſt of the fair fugitive."

The poſt chaiſe and four was that moment ordered; yet Sir James, tho' he approved of the plan

upon

upon the whole, was fearful leſt ſome accident ſhould happen to them on the road, and fifty other fears; he wiſhed to be their conductor himſelf, rather than truſt them alone; but gave up the point at their united entreaties, as they aſſured him there could be no danger; a highwayman was all they had to apprehend, and for this they would make up their minds as well as purſes. In fine, after putting up a few neceſſary articles, away they drove, and were actually on the turnpike road in leſs than an hour after the plan was formed.

They arrived at Farmer Thomſon's

ſon's about ſix o'clock in the morning. Great, it may be imagined, was the ſurpriſe of the good folks to receive ſuch early and ſuch unexpected gueſts. An excellent breakfaſt was got ready with all expedition. This revived them. Lady Sedley, in a few words, gave the neceſſary orders in regard to her young friend, and after taking an hour's reſt tenderly embraced her early charge, bidding her adieu, and promiſing to write every particular of what might happen on her return, got into her carriage, and was in Wimpole Street by one o'clock. She had the precaution however

to

to quit it at ſome diſtance from her houſe, taking a chair, to prevent as far as poſſible the obſervation of her neighbours.

Thus was the important point got over without any accident or loſs of time. Lady Sedley was in high ſpirits with her ſucceſs, and enjoyed the thoughts of the diſappointment ſhe had prepared for the unfortunate lover.

"Have we not managed this buſineſs moſt delightfully, my dear Sir James?" ſaid her ladyſhip.

"Indeed you have, my love," replied he; "but to tell you the truth, I fear the moſt puzzling part of it yet remains: pray what

are

are we to ſay to her father and his intended ſon?"

"I vow I do not exactly know *that*," replied Lady Sedley, "tis rather an aukward piece of buſineſs I muſt confeſs."

She pauſed a moment; at laſt cried—"will you, my dear Sir James, leave that wholly to me; a thought has juſt ſtruck me—'tis ridiculous I grant; but never mind that, ſo is Mr. Mennill's whole proceeding."

"Moſt willingly," anſwered Sir James, "I have no deſire to undertake it I do aſſure you."

"Oh but you muſt play your part too in the farce," replied ſhe;

ſhe; "one performer will never do."

"Well, and what character am I to ſupport pray?" cried Sir James, ſmiling.

"Why only this," ſaid her ladyſhip: "when the parties concerned arrive, receive Mr. Mennill with your uſual civility as if nothing had happened. Should Charles be with him, bow to him as a perſon you never till that moment ſet eyes on; appear aſtoniſhed at any enquiries they make concerning Miſs Mennill, and leave the reſt to me; I am ſenſible I ſhall be compelled to tell a few *fibs*, but it ſhall be as few

as

as poſſible. This is my plot, and tho' I may not *firmly* perſuade Mr. Mennill that the ſtory Charles has told him is abſolutely a *dream*, he ſhall at leaſt be ſo puzzled and confounded as not to know poſitively whether it is or not."

Sir James laughed heartily at the drollery of her ſcheme, feared ſhe would not be able to keep it up; but promiſed to ſecond her to the beſt of his power. He was juſt going to take his hat in order to go out.

"Heavens!" cried her ladyſhip, "what are you going to do? you forget the farce may for ought we know be on the point

point of beginning. Depend upon it they will be here in a few minutes. My wonder is they have not arrived long 'ere now."

He resumed his seat. Her ladyship sat down to her tambour, endeavouring to acquire courage and composure for the scene she had to go through. Why the gentlemen were so late, my reader knows already I presume. Mr. Mennill had been at Blackheath. Charles's impatience for his return home may easily be conceived: fifty times was he, as soon as the morning dawn'd, on the point of going to Wimpole street, but as often considered his going alone could

could anſwer no purpoſe. He ſent a ſervant however to watch the door: alas! he was many hours too late for making any diſcovery; all was peace and quietneſs there.

At laſt Mr. Mennill arrived at his houſe, where the reſtleſs and almoſt ſleepleſs Charles not only aſtoniſhed but highly delighted him with the important intelligence he had to communicate. The old gentleman now curſed Blackheath and all it's inhabitants, but conſoled himſelf with the thought that he ſhould of courſe find the runaway at Sir James's, ſince he with reaſon concluded their attempting to conceal her *now* could anſwer

no

no purpoſe after ſhe had been ſeen there. The carriage not having been diſmiſſed, they now both entered it, and with no ſmall emotion drove to Sir Charles Sedley's. But however violent their's might be, Lady Sedley's was infinitely more ſo when ſhe heard their rap and ſaw them enter into the houſe.

"How do you do, my good friend?" ſaid Sir James, cordially taking his hand, and at the ſame time making a polite bow to Charles; "I truſt you bring Lady Sedley and myſelf ſome pleaſing intelligence: have you heard any thing of her young friend?"

"Heyday!"

"Heyday!" cried the aſtoniſhed father, looking firſt on one and then on the other; "what the devil does all this mean?"

"Mean, my dear Sir," ſaid her ladyſhip; "did you then ſuppoſe we were ignorant of the unfortunate affair that has given you ſo much trouble and uneaſineſs?"

"No by the Lord I ſuppoſe no ſuch thing, becauſe I have pretty good reaſon to ſuppoſe to the contrary." And while ſaying this he caſt an inquiſitive glance to every corner of the room.

"I fear, Mr. Mennill," replied Lady Sedley, "by the manner

in

in which you expreſs yourſelf, my dear ſir, you have thought us negligent in not ſending more frequent enquiries; but the truth is we thought it could anſwer no end except giving you trouble; well aſſured you would kindly inform us when you had any news likely to give us pleaſure, and ſuch I confeſs I hoped was your motive for this viſit."

"All this is Greek and Hebrew to me, by all that's good!" cried he riſing, with looks of amazement: "Sir James, is your lady in her right ſenſes?—are you? am I? Charles," continued he, "what ſay you to all this? can

you make head or tail of it, for curſe me if I can."

"Fore gad," cried Charles, "'tis as complete a *bore* as ever I had the honor to meet with. All I have to ſay is that I had the felicity laſt night, very unexpectedly indeed, to pay my devoirs to your charming daughter in this very houſe, nay in this very room, if I am not egregiouſly miſtaken."

"Sir," cried Lady Sedley, as if ſhe had not comprehended him, "pray may I beg you to repeat what you was ſo good as to ſay, for I fear I did not clearly underſtand you?"

"The devil you did not!" cried Mr. Men-

Mr. Mennill; "I am ſorry to ſay I fancy your ladyſhip's intellects are not very clear this morning."

"Indeed I believe you are right," replied ſhe; "for to tell you the truth I was a ſad rake laſt night. We dined with a large party; from thence went to Ranelagh; and did not return home 'till I am almoſt aſhamed to ſay how late this morning. People go to public places now at ſuch ridiculous hours there's no enduring it."

Sir James found it nearly impoſſible to keep his gravity; Charles ſtood ſtaring with his eyes on the

full ſtretch, as if trying to diſcover whether he was or was not awake.

"Look ye, Sir James," cried Mr. Mennill, "all this may, for aught I know to the contrary, be very clever, very witty, and all that, but as I have other buſineſs at preſent, I will take it as a favor if you will be kind enough either to call my daughter down or let me ſtep up and fetch her."

"Nay Mr. Mennill," cried Lady Sedley, affecting to ſmile, "I ſhall be tempted to believe, if you carry this joke much farther, that you too, my good friend, have been raking laſt night as well as ourſelves."

"What?

"What? my daughter, Belinda Mennill," anſwered he with an emphaſis, "is not in this houſe then you would perſuade me, would you?"

"Upon my word," ſaid Sir James, "I ſhould ſuppoſe it would require no extraordinary ſhare of eloquence to do that."

"What ſhe is not here then, hey?"

"No, upon my honor!"

"Charles," cried he turning to him, "pray do me the favor to tell me what I am to think of all this?"

"By all that's whimſical," replied he, with looks of amaze-

ment, "'tis the moſt unaccountable affair I ever had the honor to be engaged in. I can only repeat that I was happy enough to do that gentleman"—bowing to Sir James—"a trifling piece of ſervice laſt night, that he in return very politely aſked me into his houſe; that *in his* houſe to my unſpeakable joy and ſurpriſe, I ſaw, and converſed for ſome time with Miſs Mennill."

"Pray," ſaid Lady Sedley, interrupting him, "of what nature was the ſervice you mention?"

"I mean not to boaſt of it, madam," replied he: "I found Sir James likely to be robbed by

two

two ill looking raſcals, and had the good fortune I believe to prevent it."

"Oh now I truſt we ſhall come to a right underſtanding," ſaid Lady Sedley. "My dear," added ſhe, turning to Sir James, "this young gentleman is pretty *nearly* right, *tho' not quite.*"

"I begin to underſtand the matter perfectly," anſwered he. Then turning to Charles—"the miſtake you are under, Sir, is now eaſily explained; you have in the firſt place only taken one door for another; Sir James Selby, who lives in the very next houſe, was, our ſervants inform us, at-

tacked laſt night while we were out; and I think, my dear, they alſo mentioned the aſſiſtance he ſo fortunately met with from a ſtranger."

"So my daughter, it *would appear*, has all this time been your next door neighbour," cried Mr. Mennill, "and I am to believe you knew nothing at all of the matter."

"And *I*," ſaid Charles, interrupting him, "am *to believe* I never till now ſet eyes upon *that* lady and that *gentleman*; the reſemblance between the Selby's, I think you call them, and yourſelves muſt be uncommonly ſtriking indeed,

indeed, or I muſt be horridly blind that could miſtake one for the other. Pleaſe heaven, I will this moment go and have a ſecond peep at my new friends; if I go on at this rate I ſhall make a pretty conſiderable addition to the number of my acquaintance. Be comforted, my dear Sir," ſpeaking to Mr. Mennill, "our troubles muſt I think be very near at an end ſince we have got within a door of the dear creature."—And he was taking his hat for that purpoſe.

"I am ſorry to inform you the family ſet off early this morning for Scarborough," ſaid Sir

James Sedley, "ſo that you cannot, ſo ſoon as you wiſh, improve the intimacy with them ſo happily commenced."

"Oh damn Scarborough," cried Mr. Mennill, out of all patience, "you too we heard ſome time ago were gone for that place; but perhaps you were *then* alſo *taken for them.*"

"Why no," replied Lady Sedley, ſmiling, "I fancy not, as we were there about a month or ſix weeks ſince; but had we not, I ſhould not be in the leaſt ſurpriſed at your having heard it, for a thouſand things are reported in this good town of ours which have

have no foundation; but if, as this young gentleman affirms, he really ſaw and ſpoke to my lovely young friend there laſt night, I confeſs I am rather ſurpriſed you were ſo late this morning in making farther enquiry, tho' as it unluckily happens you could not very well have called before the hour they ſet out; indeed if Miſs Mennill actually was with them, which forgive me, Sir, if I can hardly yet give credit to, 'tis more than probable they hurried out of town on purpoſe to avoid them."

"Why that," ſaid Mr. Mennill, "is, as your ladyſhip obſerves, likely enough; as to the

reaſon

reaſon of my being ſo late, the truth is I knew nothing of the matter till within this hour; I happened to be out of town. But who the devil are theſe Selby's? I never heard the girl mention them, yet they muſt be on a pretty intimate footing or they would not take the trouble of galloping up and down the country in this manner to pleaſe her curſed whims and fancies, and encourage her in her diſobedience."

"Upon my word," ſaid her ladyſhip, "I have not the pleaſure of their acquaintance, nor did I ever, as you obſerve, Sir, hear Miſs Mennill mention them; which makes me, I confeſs, ſtill inclined

to

to think there muſt be ſome miſtake."

"Oh pardon me there," cried Charles, "if I am compelled to diſcredit my eye ſight in regard to your ladyſhip and Sir James; the univerſe combined ſhall never perſuade me I did not both ſee and talk to the cruel Belinda."

"Well, tis a confounded piece of buſineſs altogether," ſaid Mr. Mennill, "as ever I met with, from beginning to end; however, Charles, ſince we have got ſcent of the huſſey, we'll even purſue it; I'll be curſed if ſhe eſcapes me now; and by my ſoul theſe

Selby's

Selby's ſhall pay dear for giving me ſuch a jaunt."

"You mean then to follow them?" ſaid Sir James.

"Follow them," replied the other, "to be ſure I do; but don't miſtake me—not for love of the girl believe me; no, no, ſhe has effectually done for herſelf in that particular; but ſince my friend Charles here has not got the better of his love, as I have of mine, and ſtill wiſhes to have her, by heavens he ſhall, were it only that I may break her heart; for I find ſhe has thought proper to engage her affections elſewhere without taking the trouble to conſult

ſult her father upon the occaſion."

So ſaying, to the unſpeakable ſatisfaction of Lady Sedley, they took their leave. Charles, as he walked to the door caſting a doubtful eye around him, as much as to ſay, "if this is not the identical houſe I was in laſt night, I ſhall not wonder if hereafter I forget my own name, or when looking in my glaſs take myſelf for ſomebody elſe."

CHAP.

CHAPTER XI.

THEY now proceeded to Sir John Maynard's, to whom they related the blundering ſtory, informing him of their reſolution to ſet off next morning to Scarborough, wiſhing he would make one of the party. This however Sir John declined, ſaying three could not conveniently travel in one poſt chaiſe, and either of them going in another alone would be rather a dull piece of buſineſs.

Next

Next morning then the father and hopeful ſon elect ſet off without a doubt of ſucceſs, in purſuit of the fair fugitive; and Lady Sedley, being pretty well recovered from the fatigues of the paſt day, as ſoon as breakfaſt was over ſat down to give Belinda an account of all that had happened ſince they parted.

Her ladyſhip's letter, though full of humour and vivacity, yet contained in ſubſtance merely what we are already acquainted with, ſo 'tis not neceſſary to inſert it. It found Miſs Mennill as comfortably ſettled as could well be expected, ſurrounded as ſhe was by

ſtrangers

ſtrangers only. The family conſiſted of farmer Thompſon, his wife, and one daughter. Mrs. Thompſon had formerly lived with Lady Sedley's mother, and was a very worthy, ſenſible woman. Fanny was a fine blooming girl, about twenty, to whom her father, ſhe being an only child, could give three or four hundred pounds on the day of her marriage, happen when it would, without leaving himſelf and wife pennyleſs.

Their attention to every wiſh of Miſs Mennill was unremitted. Why they were thus honored with her company they knew not, and had too much good ſenſe to enquire.

quire. It was enough to know Lady Sedley had herſelf brought her there, and given them the ſtricteſt charges to pay her every poſſible reſpect as *her* moſt intimate friend. This they ſoon found would be a moſt pleaſant taſk. Fanny was from the day of her arrival taken from all other work, that ſhe might attend wholly upon her young lady, as ſhe now called her.

That Belinda's mind was by no means at eaſe, is moſt certain: She lamented that her father's ideas of what would make her happy ſhould unfortunately differ ſo widely from her own. She was ſhocked

to

to find by what Mr. Maynard ſaid at their unexpected meeting, that he continued in the ſame way of thinking. While he did ſo ſhe could not bring herſelf to think of returning home, and therefore endeavoured to reconcile herſelf to her preſent ſituation till things ſhould take a more favourable turn. Indeed there could hardly be a more pleaſant ſituation; the houſe was better than ſhe had formed an idea of, and the country, as far as ſhe could ſee around it, appeared particularly fine. Fanny too had aſſured her it was ſo, and moreover that at about half a mile diſtance there

was

was a gentleman's ſeat, which was reckoned one of the moſt beautiful places in the county. "The gardens," continued the communicative Fanny, are quite delightful: I am ſure, madam, you will be no leſs ſo to walk there now and then; and I am well acquainted with the head gardener, who often calls here, and ſometimes brings my mother and me a noſegay: he will be proud to ſhew them to you at any time I am ſure."

Miſs Mennill thanked her for the intelligence; and, as ſhe was fond of walking, agreed to go the firſt fine morning. In the mean time Lady Sedley's account

of

of her interview with her father and lover diverted her highly, except that she felt rather hurt at his being sent on such a wild goose chase to Scarborough. This she at first could not entirely approve of, yet on mature reflection hoped the journey and change of air might be of service to him, as he took too little exercise in general for his health.

She had not long to wait for a fine day; the very next was uncommonly so; and Fanny did not forget, when she carried up her breakfast to remind her of her intended walk. She readily undertook it, accompanied by her delighted

delighted guide, who innocently took every means in her power to make the place appear to the greateſt advantage, by exaggerating the beauties of that delightful ſpot. However upon the whole, her little excurſion far exceeded her expectations, for ſhe had not followed the gardener through half the pleaſant windings and turnings of his little paradiſe, as he called it, before, turning haſtily round to Belinda, he cried—"as I live, there is my maſter—I am certain he will be highly pleaſed to pay his compliments to ſo lovely a lady. With your leave, I will

I will juſt ſtep on a little, and tell him you are here."

"Oh by no means," anſwered Miſs Mennill, "tis quite needleſs to give him that trouble."—But John was off, and in a moment returned, accompanied by—Edmond Maynard. He ſtopped on ſeeing her, and gazed, unable to believe his ſenſes; but at laſt convinced they did not deceive him, exclaimed with joy ſparkling in his fine eyes as he ſpoke—"Miſs Mennill! is it poſſible?"

While Belinda, no leſs aſtoniſhed than himſelf, cried—"good heavens! Mr. Maynard, is it you?"

"It

"It is, it is the happy, the thrice happy Edmond, my lovely Belinda!" replied he, in raptures. "Oh that my meeting you thus unexpectedly *here* may be a fortunate omen; ſurely, ſurely it muſt; heaven has at laſt heard my prayers, and ſent the dear object of my tendereſt affections to compleat my felicity."

Belinda's amazement at finding *him* the maſter of this delightful ſpot now gave place to that of hearing from him a language ſo little expected. She was unable to ſpeak; her ſurpriſe, and let me add, her joy, put it abſolutely out of her power to articulate

one syllable. Her intelligent eyes indeed might, had he not been loſt in ſo ſweet a confuſion, have told him, however unexpected, it was by no means unpleaſant.

He now tenderly taking her unreluctant hand, added—"Can you pardon me, Miſs Mennill—can you forgive this too haſty diſcovery of my ſentiments? I condemn myſelf—I ſee the impropriety of my behaviour; but to meet you thus, to meet you *here*, when I believed——"

"And what did you then believe?" ſaid Belinda, walking gently on, that the attendants might no longer be witneſs to a ſcene

ſcene ſhe found too intereſting to her heart; "tell me, Mr. Maynard, what did you believe?"

Edmond, who had in order to ſupport his lovely companion, put her arm gently under his own, looking tenderly upon her, anſwered—"Oh, Belinda—Oh, Miſs Mennill!" checking the familiarity of his firſt addreſs; "what had I not to apprehend when I ſaw you laſt."

"*Firſt* you might have ſaid with equal propriety," cried ſhe, ſmiling; "for if I forget not, Mr. Maynard, *this* is but our ſecond time of meeting, yet you would I find——"

"I understand you," said Edmond; "'tis true, I saw you but once; but however I may be to blame in having in this unguarded manner declared the impression your incomparable charms that day made upon my heart, or however improbable your amiable modesty may lead you to believe *one* interview could make so indelible an impression, it is *infinitely* less strange than true; but tell me, my lovely Belinda; (will you pardon me," continued he, "for daring to address you by that tender appellation;)—tell me, I earnestly intreat you, by what happy, what unaccountable means does

does it happen, that I am thus bleſſed with a ſight of you here; here, where of all places on earth I ſhould leaſt have preſumed to hope for ſo great, ſo unſpeakable a felicity. Where is my brother, where——"

"Oh heaven above knows," cried Miſs Mennill, "where he is; far on his way to Scarborough by this time I believe."

"To Scarborough!" exclaimed Edmond; "has he then at laſt reſigned his preſumptuous hopes?"

"Oh fie, Mr. Maynard," ſaid ſhe, ſmiling; "would you, after all the fine things you have been ſaying, now ſpoil all by making

me ſo wretched a compliment as to ſuppoſe me forſaken."

Edmond, charmed with her amiable vivacity, could not reſiſt preſſing her hand to his heart as ſhe hung on his arm, a more pleaſing proof of his approbation to the heart of the happy Belinda than any words could poſſibly have been.

"So far from being forſaken," continued ſhe in the ſame agreeable manner, "the poor ſoul is at this precious moment poſting there in ſearch of his loſt Dulcinia, who might to be ſure, had ſhe been ſo inclined, have informed him he would have his

labour

labour for his pains, as you, his brother, can now teſtify."

"Yes," cried the tranſported Edmond, "and I fervently thank heaven that I can! Oh, Miſs Mennill——"

"Nay," cried ſhe, "I thought you had juſt now got leave to cry *Oh Belinda!*"

"Have I then your leave to call you by that dear name," replied he, tenderly gazing on her; "go one ſtep—one little ſtep farther, and ſweetly tell me I have leave to call you *my* Belinda."

"Nay, *that* is quite another matter," replied ſhe; "*my* makes

a moſt wonderful difference; we will reſerve that favour for our *third* meeting if ever it ſhould happen; we have I think done tolerably well for the *ſecond*."

"If my Belinda——"

"So, ſo," cried ſhe, interrupting him, "in caſe it ſhould not happen, I find you are reſolved to make ſure of the preſent; but pray obſerve tis without my permiſſion——"

Juſt as ſhe uttered this, they found themſelves at the entrance of an elegant ſummer houſe, placed on the banks of a clear rivulet which meandered through the

the grove they were now in. He led her towards it.

"It grows late," ſaid Belinda, looking at her watch. Edmond ſighed. "You are a ſtrange, unthinking being," continued ſhe, "or more void of curioſity than any mortal I ever met with. Here have we been chatting this hour and half, and you have not yet aſked me whereabouts in this neighbourhood the caſtle I inhabit is ſituated. But as I think, if I miſtake not, you have called me angelic and ſo forth, you conjecture I have dropped from the clouds merely to pay you a viſit in this your Paradiſe."

Again he preſſed her hand to

his heart, intreating ſhe would ſtep in for a few moments, leſt ſhe ſhould find herſelf fatigued, and there gratify his curioſity.

This however ſhe declined; but ſaid if *he* was not fatigued he might walk with her towards her villa, and ſhe would endeavour to oblige him.

With rapture he obeyed; and before they reached Mr. Thompſon's (where he gueſſed ſhe came from, by her attendant Fanny, though how, or why ſhe came there he could not poſſibly conceive,) Belinda had given him a brief account of all that had paſſed ſince ſhe firſt ſaw him at her father's houſe, except

cept what had paſſed in her heart: but even of this he began to flatter himſelf he was not quite ſo ignorant as before this happy meeting. Being well acquainted at the farm, he lingered in hopes Belinda would have aſked him in. Whether inclined to do ſo is uncertain; ſhe did not however; and Edmond, more in love than ever man was, after intreating permiſſion to call upon her the next morning to enquire after her health, with reluctance, and a moſt expreſſive ſigh when obliged to reſign the ſoft hand he had ſo long had poſſeſſion of, he took his leave, and bid her a ſolitary adieu.

Fanny

Fanny and her friend John had been nearly as much ſurpriſed at what they had ſeen as either of the lovers. They too had formed a variety of conjectures, but unfortunately they had no means to come to any degree of certainty. "'Twas ſtrange!—'twas wondrous ſtrange!" and there they were obliged to reſt. They hoped however a ſhort time, and their honeſt endeavours, would clear up the myſtery.

Miſs Mennill had no ſooner reſted herſelf after her delightful walk, than taking up her pen, ſhe gave a particular account of the events of the day to her friend

Lady

Lady Sedley, in which the amiable Edmond made the principal figure. Never had ſhe ſat down to write with ſo much heart-felt pleaſure, for never till now was ſhe miſtreſs of a ſubject ſo infinitely dear to it. The farm from that moment appeared to her as the moſt favoured ſpot on earth. She every hour found new beauties in every tree, in every ſhrub. The birds ſeemed to ſing with unuſual ſweetneſs; every thing around her wore the face of ſweet content and tranquillity; ſhe herſelf had to her kind hoſts appeared even before this happy day more of the angel than a mere mortal

like

like themſelves, but now, the engaging ſmiles that played about the lovlieſt mouth in the world, and the charming vivacity that appeared in all ſhe ſaid and did, now tempted them to ſuſpect ſhe was not.

Leaving her thus employed, let us now enquire how the two gentlemen made out their journey to Scarborough. On the third day after their leaving London, they arrived at that place of gaiety and diſſipation in perfect health, but in no diſpoſition to partake of the amuſements going forward at that place. Charles indeed would have entered into them all moſt gladly,

gladly, but feared his old friend might, were he to indulge his inclination, ſuſpect the fervor of his paſſion for the object of their ſearch.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XII.

THEY were no ſooner ſeated in a comfortable room at the houſe they put up, than calling for the maſter of it, they began to aſk the names of the families now in town. The landlord, ſcratching his head to help his memory, gave them a liſt of all he could recollect—Selby however was not of the number. Mr. Mennill now aſked him if there was not a family of that name

name there at preſent. Mr. Boniface again applied his hand to his head, then ſtroaked his chin, looking up to the ceiling in profound thought, as if ſeeking for information from thence.

At laſt—"Selby?—Selby? did your honour ſay," cried he; "no, no, there certainly is not."—Then another pauſe—"Selby?—oh I have it—your honor muſt pardon me, we have ſo many people coming and going every day, that 'tis hard to ſay who is or who is not here; but I have it now—Squire Selby's family, or a name ſo like it that I think that is it, left this place yeſterday, not finding lodgings

ings to their minds, and are gone to Harrowgate."

"The devil they are," cried Mr. Mennill. "They had a young lady with them, had they not?"

"Yes, pleaſe your honor," replied the landlord, "I rather think they had."

"I wiſh to the Lord old Nick had them altogether," cried Mr. Mennill.

"Your honor is pleaſed to be merry," ſaid the maſter of the inn, judging *that* the civilleſt thing he could ſay in anſwer to the above.

"Oh yes, I am curſedly inclined to be merry, as you very ſagaciouſly

ſagaciouſly obſerve. Get me a chicken for my ſupper as faſt as you can; d'ye hear me, ſee that I have a well aired bed, and let my carriage be at the door by eight in the morning—merry indeed!"

"Yes, your honor," replied the honeſt landlord, bowing; "your honor will I hope take ſomething before you ſet out; the mornings get cold apace now, and an empty ſtomach is as bad as an empty purſe, as my wife ſays—they generally travel together."

"You may tell her from me," anſwered Mr. Mennill, "that you and

and ſhe are the fitteſt company for each other."

"True, your honor, very true as I'm a ſinner; then I'll order a doctor for the morning, ſhall I, your honor? 'twill be comfortable."

"Oh damn your doctors," cried Mr. Mennill, unfortunately miſtaking a certain compoſition of the landlord's own manufacturing for one of the faculty; "do I look as if I came here to conſult their large wigs? ſhew me one of the whole fraternity who at my age can ſhew ſuch a ſtock of health, or travel at the rate I have done for the laſt three days."

"Aye bleſs your worſhip! as you

you ſay I might look long enough before I found one," replied mine hoſt. Gladly would he have ſet his honor right in regard to the doctor; but prudently held his tongue, leſt, as he appeared rather touchy, he ſhould take it in his head to be angry at having his ignorance thus diſcovered tho' in ſo trifling a matter. He retired therefore to order the chicken and a few other articles, merely that the bill next morning might look better in the face, as Corporal Trim, of worthy memory, would have ſaid.

Charles, during this dialogue, had been walking about the room, looking

looking at the prints it was decorated with, reading the rules to be obſerved at the aſſembly which hung framed and glazed over the chimney, and ſeveral other things equally entertaining, at the ſame time humming a favorite air in the laſt new opera; finding it come to a concluſion, he now took a chair and made an attempt to reconcile his travelling companion to the diſappointment they had met with, obſerving they might with eaſe reach Harrowgate by dinner next day. In anſwer to this conſolatory remark he got only a dry—"I ſuppoſe ſo:" this was no great encouragement to proceed:

proceed: however he tried it again with no better ſucceſs, and was once or twice tempted to wiſh himſelf quietly in London with his more lively companions, and to leave the old gentleman to follow his daughter's footſteps at his leiſure; certain it is the journey had greatly leſſened the attachment he had before felt for Belinda, for to his utter amazement he no longer felt the wound he fancied Miſs Mennill's charms had made in his heart, ſo painful as it was when he firſt received it; but then the *thirty thouſand pounds down*, his paſſion for that he found if poſſible greater

than

than ever, having had time during his journey to make ſome unpleaſant reflections on the lightneſs of his purſe, and the difficulty of filling it by any other means. Since Mr. Mennill therefore choſe to take ſo much trouble in order to accompliſh his purpoſe; he thought, however the violence of his paſſion for her perſon might be evaporated during the buſtle, the wiſeſt thing he could do was to ſecond his endeavours to the utmoſt of his power. To bed then they both went, after a no very chearful ſupper, and by eight next morning found themſelves driving full

ſpeed

ſpeed to Harrowgate; at which place in due time they arrived; and putting up at the Green Dragon, enquired if a family of the name of Selby were there, or to their knowledge at any of the other houſes.

There they were not, nor had they heard of any ſuch, tho' they might be nevertheleſs at the Marquis of Granby, the Queen's Head, or ſome other of the inns.

Charles undertook to ſet off in ſearch of them; while his weary companion ordered dinner. Glad was he even of this little diſſipation; he went to all the public rooms, met with two or three

of his acquaintance, told them of his being turned knight errant, and enquired of every ſoul he met for thoſe confounded Selby's, as he with ſome reaſon called them. All in vain—no ſuch name could he hear of.

At laſt one of the waiters ſaid, a Mr. Headly's family had that morning ſet off for York, in order to be at the races; it ſounded like it, if his honor was not *quite* certain that Sedley *was* the name, it might poſſibly be the other."

"It may," cried he, "for as to being certain, I certainly am not; Sedley, Headly," repeated Charles; "curſe me if I now know which

is

is which, 'tis ſuch a confounded piece of buſineſs, ſuch a jumble of confuſion. I ſuppoſe it muſt after all be Headly. You are ſure," continued he, "they are to make ſome ſtay at York?"

"So the ſervants told me," replied the waiter.

"Had they a young lady with them?" cried Charles.

"Yes, Sir," anſwered the fellow, "they had two, and one of them was reckoned handſome, and a large fortune."

"Oh it muſt be ſo; you are undoubtedly right," ſaid Charles, again repeating Sedley, Headly, ſo often that he totally forgot

that Selby was in fact the name he ſet off with.

He found Mr. Mennill on his return at the Green Dragon conſiderably more in temper than when he left him; he had drank pretty near a bottle of excellent claret, which had produced a very agreeable effect on his ſpirits, to which the information Charles now brought added not a little, ſince they looked upon their trouble and fatigue as pretty near over as he was aſſured they were to make ſome ſtay at York. As to the jumble of names, the more they talked the matter over, the more they were convinced that

it

it muſt be Headly, as that was clearly more like Sedley than Selby.

Their next day's journey was but a ſtep; no need therefore to riſe early on that account. However ſo great was Mr. Mennill's impatience to get his daughter once again into his own hands, that he was in his carriage by ten next morning, and by two at Bluit's inn, in York.

"Is Mr. Headly's family here?" cried he as the waiter led him to a room.

"Yes, pleaſe your honor," anſwered he.

Mr. Mennill, turning his head

to Charles, giving him a ſignifi-cant wink, cried, "we are right at laſt, my boy, thank heaven;" and in they went in high ſpirits.

"Send your maſter here," continued he.

"Yes, your honor," replied the waiter, and diſappeared inſtantly. Mr. Bluit ſoon after entered the room to know his worſhip's plea-ſure.

He now ordered his dinner, and then ſaid, "ſo I find Mr. Headly and his family are here, Mr. Bluit."

"Yes, Sir," replied he, "they arrived yeſterday."

"Aye," replied the delighted Mr.

Mr. Mennill, "ſo I heard at Harrowgate; be ſo good as to ſtep with my compliments, and tell him I ſhall be glad to wait upon him for a few moments."

"Alas, Sir," anſwered Bluit, "I fear the poor gentleman is in no humour to receive company, he is in a ſad taking at preſent."

"Why what's the matter?" ſaid Mr. Mennill.

"Matter enough," replied the other. "A young lady who came here with him, and to whom he is either guardian or a relation I ſuppoſe, for I do not find ſhe is his daughter, ran off this

morning before day light with a young fellow to Scotland."

"The devil ſhe did," cried Mr. Mennill and Charles both in a breath, with looks of confuſion, rage, and diſappointment. "I wiſh with all my ſoul every female in the kingdom was at the bottom of the ſea. Guardian indeed—by heavens I have a great mind to go and blow the raſcal's brains out."

Charles, thinking this would anſwer no purpoſe in regard to himſelf, now endeavoured to pacify him, begging he would not loſe an inſtant, ſince they were now in ſo fair a way of finding her,

her; but ſet off that moment in purſuit of the happy pair whom they might eaſily overtake he made no doubt, and it would be time enough to blow the old gentleman's brains out when they came back.

"Get my carriage this moment," cried the now exaſperated father, "let me have four of the beſt horſes in your ſtables. By all that's good if I do overtake them, I will effectually cool their paſſions. Make haſte, fly; do you hear Sir; ſay nothing of all this to her guardian, as you call him, untill I come back; I have not done with him yet. If you

blab, depend upon it you'll loſe a cuſtomer, for he'll hardly wait till I return.

Away ran Bluit unable to conjecture what all this could mean. While the horſes were putting to our two travellers eat a Sandwich, drank a glaſs of wine, and in a ſtate of mind more eaſily imagined than deſcribed, ſet off as faſt as four ſtout horſes could carry them.

At the fourth ſtage they aſked if they had a couple there on their road to Gretna Green (as you may be ſure they had done at them all.) The landlord, gueſſing at once by the ſmoaking condition

dition of their horſes that they meant to ſtop the journey of the lovers, putting his finger ſlily to his lips and pointing to a particular room with an expreſſive look, nodded his aſſent to the queſtion, leading them quietly into one adjoining to that in which the lovers were. All this caution was highly neceſſary on the part of the ſagacious landlord; but his two gueſts were in no humour to be very ceremonious; without waiting therefore for his introduction, in they both bounced to the great terror of the poor trembling lovers; who hearing the rattling of their carriage had given themſelves

themſelves over for loſt, not doubting but they were purſued. But judge what aſtoniſhment filled the whole group when they ſaw each other. The young lady's fears indeed on ſeeing a pair of ſtrangers, were conſiderably leſſened; but not ſo ſoon Mr. Mennill's rage; for as ſhe had drawn back to the darkeſt corner of the apartment, he ſprung forwards, drawing her from it by the ſhoulders, and calling her by no very tender names. But in a moment perceiving his miſtake, he let her go, and exclaimed—"why who, in the devil's name, are you?"

"And pray gentlemen who the devil

devil are you?" cried the now reaſſured lover, ſtepping briſkly up to them, "that thus preſume to intrude upon our privacy?"

"Who," replied Mr. Mennill in the greateſt conſternation; "I will not undertake to aſcertain even that or any thing elſe, again as long as I live. I beg your pardon—let that ſuffice. Take my word for it I have more reaſon to be angry than you have; but that's no affair of your's."

So ſaying, he bounced out of the room with as little ceremony as he had bounced into it, curſing every thing that fell in his way, not forgetting poor Belinda, whom he

he now gave up, ſwearing he had finally done with her, and ſhe might go to the devil her own way; and getting into his carriage, the poor mortified Charles *unbidden* took his ſeat by him, and they ſet off on their return for London. A moſt uncomfortable pair of companions they now proved to each other as ever travelled: the latter wiſhing with all his ſoul he had never ſet eyes on either the father or daughter, and looking upon the whole from beginning to end as a moſt compleat *bore*; the former repeatedly ſwearing women were formed for no earthly purpoſe but to plague every mortal

tal who had any thing to do with them. I am not ſure whether he did not in his own mind ſwear to turn even Willſon out of doors the moment he got home. Home he did get to at laſt: but there was a certain inſinuating ſomething in that damſel's countenance which the moment ſhe flew to welcome his honor's ſafe return put that cruel purpoſe quite out of his head. Charles immediately took his leave, not much delighted with the thoughts of giving Sir John the particulars of their ſentimental journey.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XIII.

AS ſoon as Mr. Mennill had by Willſon's care and attention recovered ſome degree of temper, ſhe told him that a young man had called two or three times during his abſence, and that ſhe had aſked him if he had any meſſage to leave; that he anſwered he had not, yet wiſhed to ſpeak to Mr. Mennill about very particular buſineſs, and would call again.

"What

"What can the fellow want with me?" ſaid Mr. Mennill.

"I can't gueſs," anſwered ſhe, "but he ſeems very anxious to ſee your honor."

"Well, let me know when he comes again."

This he did in a few days, and was admitted.

"Well, friend," ſaid Mr. Mennill, "pray what is your pleaſure with me?"

"Pleaſe your honor, replied the man, I am come to tell you I can inform you where Miſs Mennill is."

"You inform me," cried her father. "Are you ſure, young man of what you ſay?"

"Perfectly

"Perfectly ſure Sir," anſwered he, "for I was the poſtillion who drove her out of town."

"The devil you was! and how then have you the impudence to ſee my face? who are you? who employed you? was ſhe accompanied by a lover?"

"No, pleaſe your honor, ſhe was not. But I muſt make a few conditions by your leave, Sir, before I proceed to give any farther particulars relative to this buſineſs. In the firſt place I muſt have your honor's word that you will not aſk who employed me, or who I live with, becauſe I neither want to loſe a good place, nor to betray my

my miſtreſs farther than is neceſſary: and in the next place, as I am a poor fellow who works hard for my bread, I hope your honor will not think me to blame for hoping you will reward me for the diſcovery I have it in my power to make."

"Well," cried Mr. Mennill, not a little agitated at the thoughts of having an opportunity at laſt of being revenged on poor Belinda for all the trouble ſhe had coſt him, "tell me firſt, are you certain ſhe is not married to ſome worthleſs fellow or other, ſince in that caſe I ſhall leave her to follow her own devices."

"No

"No that ſhe a'nt I'll take my oath," replied the poſtillion.

"Be ware how you venture to ſwear unleſs you are very certain," ſaid Mr. Mennill, "that you are right."

"O I wiſh," replied he, "I was as ſure of a good reward."

"And what ſum now," cried Mr. Mennill, "ſhould you look upon as ſuch?"

"Why I hope your honor will not think ten guineas too much?"

"Pretty well, pretty well," replied he, "for being engaged in ſo infamous a buſineſs."

"But conſider, pleaſe your wor-

ſhip,

ſhip, I am but a poor *ſarvent.*" [*ſcratching his head*]

"True. And you are abſolutely ſure I ſhall find her where you left her?"

"Quite ſure," ſaid the informer.

"Well then I will give you the ſum you aſk on your own conditions; ſo let me have all the neceſſary information inſtantly."

This he gave in a very particular manner; and having pocketed his reward took his leave.

Mr. Mennill was now agitated with a thouſand different emotions; rage and indignation however, we are ſorry to ſay, were predominant. At ſome moments he thought giving

giving her to Maynard was too great a reward for her diſobedience; but then again he conſidered that though he looked upon it in that light his daughter did not: on the contrary it was to ſhun being his ſhe had taken this unpardonable ſtep. What greater puniſhment then could he deviſe than compelling her to give him her hand. However ſevere ſhe might think it, he was perſuaded the world would acquit him. This reflection determined him ot once. He ordered his carriage, and driving to his friend Sir John, gave him an account of the diſcovery he had ſo fortunately made. Charles

was

was preſent, and found as his hopes revived his paſſion begin to revive alſo, and preſſed for an immediate departure in ſearch of his charming though cruel miſtreſs.

They firſt however held a conſultation on the ſubject of the compulſive meaſures they were determined to follow if poſſible. The plan had its difficulties they were but too ſenſible. The ſpirit ſhe had already ſhewn convinced them they would not be eaſily conquered. Sir John promiſed to have a ſpecial licence in readineſs againſt their return. He would prepare the clergyman to expect no very willing bride, and all that then remained

was

was for Mr. Mennill to convey her to church on the day they ſhould appoint.

Having ſettled this important matter in the beſt manner they were able, the father of Belinda, with her unworthy lover, agreed to ſet off once more together; but in far better ſpirits than before, being now certain where to find her. As they had perfectly recovered the fatigue of their former peregrinations, they ſet off by ſix o'clock next morning, hoping to have her ſafe in Portland Place the ſame evening; the farm, as we have already ſaid, being not more than thirty miles from London,

Charles,

Charles, as they advanced towards the place of Belinda's retreat, obſerved that it could not, by the road they were going, be far, he fancied, from his brother's ſeat. This ſurmiſe was confirmed the farther they went. It never occurred to either of them however that *he* could be any ways intereſted in the preſent buſineſs. He had ſeen her but once, they imagined; and thought it more than probable, however near ſhe might now be to him, he might be totally ignorant of it, as ſhe of courſe went there in order to be concealed from every one, and above all from a perſon ſo nearly connected

with the very man from whom ſhe fled, ſuppoſing ſhe found he lived ſo near Oak Farm. This circumſtance therefore gave them no concern.

They drove on in high ſpirits, looking upon all their troubles as very near an end. But judge of their mutual aſtoniſhment on coming within an hundred yards of Thompſon's houſe, when they beheld Belinda walking by the ſide of the identical Edmond, familiarly leaning on his arm, her hand tenderly preſſed in his.

She inſtantly knew her father's carriage, ſaw him, ſaw the now more than ever deteſted Charles, and

and inſtantly ſhrieking with terror, fell lifeleſs into the arms of her adoring lover. What a ſcene of confuſion was here; for a moment Mr. Mennill felt ſome ſymptoms of parental affection on ſeeing her in that ſtate of inſenſibility; but it was for a moment only; he had from the firſt been prejudiced againſt Edmond, he believed him a mere pedant, a mere learned blockhead, without one grain of manly ſpirit in his whole compoſition, and conſequently held him in ſovereign contempt.

Charles knew him better, and to his unſpeakable mortification be-

held in his happy brother a very formidable rival. He curſed him moſt fervently, and no leſs fervently wiſhed him at old Nick.

While making theſe no very pleaſant reflections they had left the carriage, and ſprung forwards to receive their prey, meaning to convey her in the ſtate ſhe was in to the neareſt inn, and there at their leiſure uſe proper means to bring her to herſelf; but Edmond was in no humour to reſign his lovely burthen, he claſped her to his breaſt, declaring no power on earth ſhould force her from him.

"May be ſo, young man," cried

cried Mr. Mennill, more than ever enraged at what he called his impertinent declaration, "we ſhall ſoon ſee who dares diſpute the will of a juſtly incenſed father."

While this altercation paſſed, Belinda faintly opened her eyes, and begging Edmond would diſengage her from his encircling arms with a look that pierced him to the ſoul, ſhe dropped on her knees to her father, unable to aſk that forgiveneſs ſhe ſo earneſtly wiſhed him to grant.

"And muſt I then loſe you, my dear Belinda!" cried her amiable lover; "muſt I thus reſign

the fond hopes I have been permitted to indulge?—oh-Miſs Mennill!"

"Yes," cried her father with fury in his eyes on finding *he* was the man who had occaſioned all this trouble and confuſion; for tho' he could not clearly account for it, he now firmly believed Edmond and ſhe had been longer acquainted than he knew of, and that it was on *his* account ſhe had rejected Charles.

Charles was of the ſame opinion, and doubly enraged at being thus as he imagined impoſed upon by a brother.

"Yes, young man, be aſſured thoſe

thoſe hopes are for ever at an end. For the friendſhip I bear your father, I forbear to reproach you as you deſerve; take your laſt look of this undutiful girl, and take my word for it that the next time you meet, if ever you do, you ſhall find her the wife of your brother."

The lovers, now claſping their hands in ſilent agony, gazed on each other with unutterable tenderneſs. Charles caſt a look of inſulting triumph on Edmond, whoſe heart was too deeply intereſted in the fate of his lovely Belinda to pay any attention to it; he ſtill hoped the hour would come when

he ſhould triumph in his turn. Miſs Mennill had aſſured him he alone poſſeſſed her tendereſt affections, and tho' ſhe had withſtood all his fond ſolicitations to become his wife without her father's permiſſion, which he had, with all the engaging eloquence he was maſter of, preſſed her to do, yet ſhe had ſolemnly vowed never to give her hand to another. With this ſweet conſolation, he was compelled to reſign her for the preſent, finding all attempts to detain her muſt be in vain. Had he had Charles only to contend with, the caſe would have been different; but he could not

bring

bring himſelf to violate the reſpect due to the father of her he loved more than life.

Perſuaded they had now conquered, they ordered the door of the carriage to be opened. Belinda, oppreſſed as ſhe was with this diſtreſſing event, yet found an opportunity to ſay in a whiſper to her diſtracted lover—"do not yield to deſpair, my amiable Edmond; if I live I will yet be your's." He had only time to look his gratitude; ſhe was now, more dead than alive, put into it, and without permitting her to take leave of her kind friends at the farm, away they

drove. 'Tis hard to say which of the two lovers were most wretched.

The impertinent raptures Charles attempted to assume highly disgusted poor Belinda. Her father's stern behaviour during the painful journey was but little calculated to afford her any consolation. His thoughts were deeply employed on the means necessary to be taken in order to get her fairly married, that he might be relieved from all farther trouble. He scarce opened his lips 'till they were set down at his own door. There Charles took his leave, putting on all the airs of an adoring lover; and 'tis certain he again thought her the loveliest

lieſt, the moſt deſirable creature he ever beheld, and was as paſſionately in love with her as it was in his nature to be with any of her ſex. To every ſentiment of delicacy he was an utter ſtranger: the averſion he could not but ſee ſhe felt for him, therefore gave him no concern; he was clearly of opinion that averſion muſt at all events be the conſequence of marriage, and its having the ſtart of the ceremony he thought made mighty little difference.

He now returned to Sir John, exulting in his ſucceſs, and looking upon both her and her fortune as his own.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XIV.

BELINDA was ordered to prepare for accompanying him to church on the third day after her return home. All reſiſtance ſhe found would be in vain; ſhe determined then to comply; but when there, her laſt reſource to declare freely to the clergyman that compulſion alone had brought her there, fully perſuaded he durſt not ſo far profane the ſacred ceremony as to proceed

proceed after ſuch a declaration. What the conſequence might be ſhe knew not; dreadful no doubt; but at leaſt it would put an end to her father's preſent deſign, and things might take a more favorable turn; nay even Charles ſhe hoped would after ſo public an affront, if he had a grain of ſpirit, reject her hand in his turn. Having thus made up her mind, ſhe felt ſome degree of eaſe, and ſitting down, wrote a particular account of all that happened, to her friend Lady Sedley, who, as we have ſaid, ſet off for Windſor the day after ſhe had conveyed Miſs Mennill to

Oak

Oak Farm, and with whom ſhe had correſponded conſtantly during her ſtay there. She alſo informed her ladyſhip of the reſolution ſhe had formed; nor was it a new idea, having frequently in the courſe of this buſineſs talked of putting that deſperate plan in execution, ſhould ſhe, as ſhe feared, be driven to extremities; ſhe now alſo intreated her friend to aſk Sir James's opinion of it, and if poſſible let her know what it was before the fatal moment arrived.

This, Lady Sedley did not fail to do; and, to Belinda's infinite ſatisfaction, ſhe found he approved highly

highly of it, ſaying—"it *muſt* at leaſt put off the evil hour, and in all human probability for ever."

Thus encouraged, ſhe did her utmoſt to fortify her mind, and prepare it for the important trial ſhe had to go through.

Mr. Mennill, tho' now well aſſured her affections were placed on another, yet believed ſhe would make no farther reſiſtance finding it could anſwer no purpoſe; he therefore began to lay aſide ſome degree of his ſeverity and felt he had not wholly loſt the tenderneſs of a father.

The dreaded morning at length arrived: Sir John, his ſon, and a lady who was aſked to be of the

the cruel party, were at Mr. Mennill's by ten o'clock. The poor trembling, agitated Belinda heard the ſound of their carriage, and too well gueſſing who it was, had nearly fainted as ſhe ſat in her dreſſing room waiting for the horrid ſummons. Willſon's officious attention and affected tenderneſs diſguſted her; yet it ſaved her from ſwooning as ſhe prevailed upon her to take a few drops.

Mr. Mennill, contrary to her hopes, came up himſelf to lead her down. She endeavoured to riſe as he entered, but could not, ſo great was her agitation; ſhe was almoſt breathleſs; ſhe took

out

out her ſmelling bottle—ſhe begged a glaſs of water. Never was a creature in ſo wretched a condition as poor Belinda; even her obdurate, her cruel father, felt ſome ſymptoms of remorſe, but ſtifling them as well as he could, took her hand ſaying—"come, come, my dear daughter, it will ſoon be over, and you will be the happieſt girl in England; come, let me lead you down."

She now aroſe—"lead me, Sir, where you pleaſe," cried ſhe, tears, in ſpite of all her efforts to reſtrain them, falling down her pale cheek: "be quick, Sir, O let me not have time to think

—lead

—lead me to the carriage—ſpare me the horror of ſeeing the inſenſible wretch who has thus by his baſe endeavours contrived to ſteel my father's once affectionate heart againſt his child—let me not ſee him till there is an abſolute neceſſity for it, leſt my courage ſhould forſake me."

She followed him, ſcarce able to ſupport her tottering frame. Her father *now* willing to indulge her, put her into his own carriage, and himſelf only getting into it with her, bid a ſervant tell Sir John and the reſt of the company to follow.

They too ſoon reached the church

for

for Miſs Mennill's peace—he led her in. The triumphant bride-groom, aſſuming an air of tenderneſs, took his place by her ſide. The clergyman began the ſolemn ſervice, and had juſt got to the queſtion—"wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife?"—to which Charles was bowing his aſſent, when a young lady ſtepped from one of the pews where ſhe had been concealed, and coming forward with a timid air, to their utter aſtoniſhment and confuſion cried, "ſtop, Sir; he cannot give his hand to that lady 'till I am laid in my grave; behold in me the lawful,

though

though much injured wife of the faithleſs, the perjured Charles Maynard."

Miſs Mennill in the greateſt conſternation, thought her an angel ſent from heaven to ſave her from wretchedneſs. Joy and amazement had nearly produced the ſame effects that ſorrow had done before. She ſtaggered to the rails of the communion table, and leaning againſt them in order to ſupport herſelf, ſtood in an almoſt lifeleſs ſtate viewing a ſcene abſolutely incomprehenſible. Charles no ſooner caſt his eyes upon the (to him) moſt unwelcome intruder, than with a face pale as death he exclaimed,

" heaven

"heaven and earth! what do I ſee?" then endeavouring to recover ſome little preſence of mind, he added, "Woman, by what authority have you thus dared to——"

"Be calm, Mr. Maynard," cried the ſtranger, interrupting him with a dignity in her manner which plainly teſtified ſhe was no impoſtor, "do not attempt by affecting ignorance, to add to your guilt. 'Tis too late, Sir. Well do you know I can, and (you have only yourſelf to thank for it,) the hour is at laſt come in which I am determined to aſſert my right." Then turning to Sir John, who ſtood petrified with horror, ſhe

continued—"Yes, Sir, in me you behold the wife of that ungenerous, that unworthy ſon; and I truſt, if you will deign to hear my unfortunate ſtory, however much you may think me to blame, you will confeſs I am ſtill more to be pitied."

"What am I to think of all this?" cried Sir John, darting a look of indignation on the evidently guilty Charles: ſpeak Sir, inſtantly ſpeak, and tell me without prevarication what you have done."

His ſon was ſilent.

"'Tis well, Sir;" continued Sir John, "that ſullen ſilence tells but too plainly what I have to expect. Be gone! fly! never, never preſume

preſume to appear again in my preſence unleſs fully able to clear yourſelf from this horrid accuſation."

Charles, the guilty Charles, had not courage to reply. The lady, baſely as he had injured her, made an attempt to plead for him.

"If you wiſh to prove yourſelf the injured wife you pretend, madam," cried Sir John, interrupting her, "or have any deſire that I ſhould hear patiently what you have to ſay for yourſelf, plead not for a wretch you ought, if what you aſſert is true, to look upon with abhorrence. In juſtice I cannot refuſe to hear you: take then *his* place in my carriage, which

which I muſt, till he is able to prove his innocence, think him unworthy to fill; and go home with me, that my painful curioſity may be immediately gratified." Then again turning to his ſon, "Go, Sir," ſaid he; "you know the terms on which alone we can ever meet again."

To paint the ſituation of Mr. Mennill's mind during this wonderful ſcene, or that of his now happy daughter, is far beyond the power of my abilities. I muſt leave it to the imagination of my readers to conceive the various emotions they had both experienced. So violent were Sir John's ſtill, that he

he had almoſt forgot the purpoſe for which they were there aſſembled. Charles, like a guilty criminal, now quitted the church without having the courage to look one of the company in the face. This rouſed Sir John from the reverie he had fallen into. He turned to Mr. Mennill, but felt himſelf at a loſs for expreſſion. At laſt, "O my friend," cried he, "how have I been deceived! how ought we all to rejoice at that amiable creature's fortunate eſcape, [looking tenderly on Belinda] if what we have juſt heard is true. But true or not, I fear, yes I fear we have both been to blame. Can you, Miſs Mennill,

generouſly pardon the too great part I have taken in thus diſtreſſing you? Can you, my dear young lady, in conſideration of a father's partiality for a child he believed worthy even to poſſeſs ſo great a treaſure as yourſelf, can you forgive the trouble and anxiety I have occaſioned you? Gladly, moſt gladly, would I believe he is not guilty; yet alas appearances are too ſtrongly againſt him to warrant my indulging this delightful hope."

"O Sir," cried the gentle-hearted Belinda, ſoftened even to tears by this ſpeech of Sir John's, "do not add to my diſtreſs by doubting it a moment. All I aſk in return for the favour

favour you deign to aſk is, that you will intercede for me with my beloved father, prevail on him to reſtore me once more to the place in his affections I have ſo unfortunately loſt, and be aſſured every paſt tranſaction ſhall on my part be forgot."

"Come to my arms, my dear girl," cried Mr. Mennill, "and let me preſs you to my heart. Belinda, my dear Belinda, I fear I have not been quite ſo good a father as you have deſerved."

His enraptured daughter ran and fondly threw her arms about him, tears of joy ſtreaming from her fine eyes, crying "O Sir, ſpare me, ſpare your poor girl! This is far

greater happineſs than ſhe is able to bear. Continue but to be thus kind, and your Belinda ſhall make it the ſtudy of her future life how to deſerve it."

"I will do more," ſaid her repentant father; "yes, I will do more; I will try to make an atonement for what is paſt, and of ſuch a nature as I truſt will be moſt acceptable to your heart, my dear girl. What it is I will inform my friend Sir John, whoſe approbation I ſhall find neceſſary before I can firmly promiſe it, as ſoon as we have gained ſome degree of tranquillity."

Belinda gueſſed what he meant, and could hardly conceal the pleaſ-

ing

ing emotions which now filled her breaſt. A ſweet ſmile of content and gratitude appeared on her expreſſive countenance, which plainer than any language could have done, ſpoke her thanks.

They now prepared to quit a place which had witneſſed ſo unexpected a revolution in her affairs. She had a great curioſity to hear the lady's ſtory, and feared it would not be gratified ſo ſoon as ſhe wiſhed. Sir John however intreated Mr. Menill and his daughter would indulge him with their company for the reſt of the day, ſaying they no doubt wiſhed, and certainly had a right to hear, what motives the lady then

preſent had for acting in the manner ſhe had that morning done. To this they readily agreed; and having taken leave of the aſtoniſhed clergyman, who I have not a doubt would gladly have been of the party, they drove to Sir John's; where having taken a diſh of chocolate, and ſat half an hour to give the lady time to recollect herſelf, ſhe at their requeſt began what ſhe had to ſay in the following manner:

"'Tis now," ſaid ſhe, addreſſing herſelf to Sir John, "near two years ſince I firſt had—muſt I call it the misfortune—to ſee your ſon at a ball given after the races at Stamford. My

My father's name was Beverley. He was colonel of a regiment of dragoons, and of a family I need not bluſh to be deſcended from. You may poſſibly know them Sir: they have a conſiderable eſtate in that part of the country. He was a younger ſon, of courſe had but little fortune beſides his commiſſion. He married a woman of family alſo; but ſhe had only merit and beauty to recommend her: this my father thought ſufficient, though his did not. I was born in the firſt year of their marriage, and had the irreparable misfortune to loſe my mother before I had attained my tenth year.

I was now put under the care of

an aunt of her's, who had from my infancy been tenderly attached to me. My worthy and moſt amiable father ſurvived her only four years. All he could leave me was about five hundred pounds. I will not, Sir, treſpaſs on your patience by unneceſſary particulars. I had no friend now on whom I could depend but my aunt, who had indeed, as far as woman could do, ſupplied to me the loſs of a mother. With her, I continued to live as happily as it was poſſible for one to do who had been thus at ſo early an age deprived of parents ſo juſtly dear to her.

At this ball your ſon was pleaſed to diſtinguiſh me by every poſſible attention.

attention. He aſked permiſſion to viſit me. My aunt on my account was flattered by it. Sorry am I to ſay I too ſoon found his views were ſuch as I could not encourage. He was now forbid the houſe. I was ſhocked—I was mortified. Conſcious that in my conduct he could have ſeen nothing on which to found thoſe ungenerous hopes he preſumed to entertain. My young heart too felt moſt ſeverely the cruel diſappointment; for he had by his inſinuating, his engaging manners, gained but too great an intereſt in it. Yet ſenſible he no longer deſerved the place he had held in it, I determined to ſee him no more.

"He now wrote to me every hour. I had the fortitude to return all his letters unopened. At laſt he addreſſed himſelf to my aunt: he offered to marry me; implored her mediation; aſſured her ſhe ſhould herſelf be witneſs to the ceremony: all he aſked was that our union might be kept a ſecret till he could without hazard reveal it to his father. My aunt, whoſe declining health made her anxious for my fate, adviſed me to reflect ſeriouſly on his propoſal. Alas! I was but too much inclined to obey. In ſhort, we were married.

"I had given him my ſolemn promiſe to wait his time for declaring it: and though in leſs than ſix months

I had

I had the mortification to find he beheld me with cold indifference, and no doubt condemned himſelf for the ſtep he had taken, yet ſo ſacred did I hold the promiſe I had made him, that I never would have betrayed his ſecret had it not been with a view to ſave this lady from even a more wretched fate than my own.

"After the firſt ſix months of our unfortunate union, I rarely ſaw him; and but ſeldom had even the conſolation of hearing from him; before the end of the year I was rendered compleatly miſerable by the loſs of my affectionate aunt.

"Having loſt his faithleſs heart, my delicacy, my pride was ſuch, that I ſcorn'd

I ſcorned being indebted to him for any pecuniary favors. Small as my fortune was, I determined it ſhould ſerve me.

"I continued in the houſe where I had ſo many years reſided, and your ſon, Sir, will I truſt do me the juſtice to acknowledge, ſuſtained my unhappy lot without a murmur; reproaches I well knew would only ſerve to exaſperate him, to time alone I truſted for ſome happy change in my ſituation. What I ſuffered, I will not attempt to deſcribe. I at laſt heard of his intended marriage with Miſs Mennill; I alſo heard the lady was averſe to it. I there-

I therefore hoped it would not take place. I was informed by a friend of every ſtep taken to accompliſh it. I trembled for the amiable creature who was thus on the brink of ruin. My promiſe I no longer looked upon as binding; on the contrary I felt it was my indiſpenſible duty to prevent it.

"The reſignation with which I had hitherto ſubmitted to his cruel neglect, had no doubt perſuaded him I had given over all thoughts of ever being acknowledged as his wife, and probably made me indifferent to his conduct; and he was in ſome meaſure

ſure right: I had too long been fatally convinced I had nothing to hope for, nor ſhould I have made any attempts to interrupt his pleaſures, if ſuch they can with propriety be called, had he not formed this unpardonable, this guilty plan. Self, I can with truth affirm, was with me out of the queſtion. Well did I know, that by betraying as I have now done his important ſecret, I muſt loſe every hope; but I had the heartfelt conſolation to know that in doing it I acted as I ought.

"This, Sir, is a very brief account of my unhappy ſituation," ſaid the lady; "ſhould any doubts remain

remain in your breaſt in regard to the certainty of my ill fated marriage, tis amply in my power, thank heaven, to remove them. I mean not to aſk your interceſſion in my favor with the cruel author of all my woes; no, Sir, I now look upon him with more than indifference, not for worlds would I again put myſelf under the protection of a man my reaſon, my beſt judgment, compels me to deſpiſe. Forgive me, Sir John, this harſh expreſſion; I have alas! but too much cauſe to make uſe of it, and permit me to add before I conclude, I neither expect nor deſire any other favor from him, or any of his family, than

to

to ſtand acquitted of blame. The little I poſſeſs ſhall ſuffice to maintain me while an inhabitant of this world; long I truſt that will not be; yet if it is the will of heaven that I am not ſo ſoon as I earneſtly wiſh to be releaſed from it, I will, as I have hitherto done, ſubmit to its all wiſe decrees with what fortitude and reſignation I am able."

Thus the amiable, and no leſs unfortunate Mrs. Maynard, as we muſt now call her, ended her ſtory. Belinda was charmed not only with her appearance, but the ſpirited manner in which ſhe had ended her little unfortunate narrative; ſhe admired

mired her noble pride, and longed to be better acquainted with ſo young a creature, for ſhe did not appear to be above eighteen years of age, who had conducted herſelf on ſo trying an occaſion with ſo much propriety and great underſtanding.

She would now have taken her leave; but Sir John, who was no leſs prejudiced in her favour than Miſs Mennill, kindly ſaid he could not part with her ſo ſoon; he had ſtill many queſtions to aſk, many intereſting things to ſay to her, as well as many things to ſettle; for tho' ſhe with becoming pride had told him ſhe expected nothing *from him*, ſhe muſt give him permiſſion

to

to act in this particular buſineſs as he might think proper. She was his daughter, and as ſuch he muſt teach her obedience to his commands. This he ſaid with ſo pleaſing a ſmile that it was pretty plain to his friends he did not mean they ſhould be very ſevere.

The reſt of the day was paſſed as agreeable as could be expected after the event of the morning. Sir John did not once mention his ſon; of courſe no other perſon would do it. When the hour of parting arrived, Sir John would have ordered his carriage to ſet his daughter down, but Belinda begged he would permit her and her father to have that pleaſure;

pleaſure; this was agreed to, and they found ſhe had from the time Charles's marriage had been firſt talked of, been with a friend of her's in Seymour-ſtreet, that ſhe might be at hand to put her deſign of preventing it into execution. Here then they ſet her down, Belinda aſking permiſſion to call upon her the next day, which was granted with great pleaſure; and Mr. Mennill now conveyed his daughter home, ſtill Miſs Mennill, with more real ſatisfaction than he could poſſibly have experienced had he ſucceeded in the purpoſe for which he left it.

The aſtoniſhment and ſad diſappointment of Mrs. Willſon on ſeeing her

her young lady return unmarried, I will paſs over, only obſerving that it was great; indeed all her hopes of figuring in a higher line than merely houſekeeper vaniſhed at once.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XV.

CHARLES Maynard, on leaving the church, found his mind in ſuch a ſtate of diſtraction that he, for a few moments, thought the wiſeſt thing he could do in order to compoſe it was to ſhoot himſelf through the head. That he never could ſee his father on the terms offered, he well knew; conſcious that all the lady had aſſerted was ſtrictly true, and that ſhe not only could, but no doubt would clearly prove it to be ſo.

She

She had ſo long ceaſed giving him any trouble, or concerning herſelf about him, that he flattered himſelf ſhe never would; his affairs were ſo deranged, his debts ſo much greater than he had any hopes of being able to diſcharge, that he had no reſource but agreeing to the match propoſed by his father. He endeavoured to perſuade himſelf if he could but bring that buſineſs to a happy concluſion he could not only ſatisfy his creditors, but alſo his injured wife, by purchaſing her ſilence. Her paſt reſignation encouraged him to believe this would be attended with no great difficulty; but we have ſeen he miſtook her character.

character. He was now convinced to his utter confuſion he had, nor knew which way to turn himſelf. The idea of having recourſe to a piſtol had, while making ſome no very pleaſant reflections, gradually evaporated; he conſidered that was in his power at any time, and it was too ſerious a buſineſs to be done in a hurry; yet I think I may venture to ſay, if not done in a hurry, it will be ſeldom done at all.

He now determined to try the efficacy of a letter to Sir John, which ſhould contain a full confeſſion of his guilt, of his penitence, and of his purpoſe to quit England immediately if he would be graciouſly pleaſed

pleaſed to afford him the means of doing it.

He immediately ſat down and wrote the letter which was to decide his fate; ſhould the anſwer be unfavorable, he might then take the piſtol ſcheme again into conſideration, and indeed it appeared to him in that caſe the only remedy left.

Sir John was ſhocked beyond all expreſſion on finding how groſsly he had been deceived in the opinion he had formed of his favorite ſon, and began when too late to find a man of the world, a man of faſhion and *bon ton*, was not quite ſo deſirable a character as he had till now abſurdly believed. The amiable,

amiable, the accompliſhed Edmond now occurred to him, and he could not but confeſs it was likely to do him more credit than he had any reaſon to expect from the guilty Charles, were his repentance ever ſo ſincere. In his firſt emotions he was tempted to throw his letter with juſt indignation into the fire without deigning to anſwer it, and leave him to his fate; however, on reflection, he took up his pen, and in few words told him he would, on condition he inſtantly left the kingdom, allow him enough, and perhaps, ſhould his future conduct merit ſo great a favour, a little more than to ſave him from ſtarving.

Charles on receiving it was again tempted to apply to his friend, the piſtol. The word ſtarving was the moſt unpleaſant his eyes had ever encountered. He paused; he turned his thoughts on every ſide; and at laſt decided on going abroad; he ſhould at leaſt ſee the world, tho' he might not have it in his power fully to enjoy the pleaſures of it. Some lucky circumſtance might even render that poſſible; he might be fortunate at play: how many men had he known who figured in life with no other reſource; hitherto 'tis true he had not been very ſucceſsful, but fortune was fickle, ſhe might give her wheel a turn in his favor.

He

He ordered a poſt chaiſe, and next morning ſet off for Dover, having received from his father his firſt quarter's allowance—a few days before it would have appeared a very trifling ſum, ſcarce more than ſufficient to ſerve him a tenth part of the time it was now deſtined for; but there was no help for it; in the firſt moment of Sir John's wrath it would have been a folly to expect a greater indulgence. Time he hoped would mitigate it, and the next remittance of courſe be more ample. He arrived in ſafety at Calais, and from thence ſet off for Paris, where, wiſhing him all the felicity he merits, let us leave him to do the beſt he can.

While Sir John was employed in ſettling the above moſt mortifying buſineſs, and Mr. Mennill conſidering in what manner he ſhould beſt bring about a plan he had formed by which he meant to give Belinda an agreeable ſurpriſe, ſhe was writing the following letter to her friend, Lady Sedley.

Oh my dear, dear friend, how ſhall I give you an idea of my preſent joy; words I am certain never can do it. Ah why are you not in town that you might have the pleaſure of ſeeing me abſolutely out of my wits. Never, never ſure was there ſo ſtrange, ſo unlooked for, ſo happy

happy a change as in the ſituation of your poor Belinda. But the means by which this delightful revolution was brought about—'tis this, my beloved Lady Sedley, I wiſh to relate, but how, or where to begin, I actually am ſtill ſo compleatly aſtoniſhed, I know not; let me however attempt it.

"The miſerable, the dreadful, and juſtly dreaded moment arrived, in which I was to be led to church, as my father believed, with leſs reluctance than he had any reaſon to expect. Ah little, very little, did he gueſs I was on the contrary determined when there to give him convincing proofs he was deceived.

Thank heaven, that trial was ſpared me; I had no occaſion to put my deſperate plan in execution, and now tremble at the bare thought, that it might poſſibly, if I had, not have ſaved me from the fate I feared.

"I leave you, my dear friend, to imagine what were my feelings when led to the carriage by my father; I was more dead than alive; ſuch a bride, ſo pale, ſo death like, ſure never was ſeen. Well—the vile, infamous Charles, elate with hope, and triumphing in the miſchief he had ſo nearly wrought, ſtuck himſelf up at your Belinda's ſide, attempting to aſſume an air proper for the occaſion. Horrid wretch!—

wretch!—little did any of us dream at that diſtracting moment it was not *his firſt appearance* in that character. The clergyman began the ſolemn ſervice, I in terrors inconceivable liſtening to him leſt I ſhould miſs the proper moment to put a ſtop to it. At laſt—"wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife?" the creature was in the act of giving his conſent, when out of one of the pews came a lovely young woman, and ſtepping forward, exclaimed—"hold, Sir: he cannot, ſhall not give that hand to any other than myſelf till I am laid in my ſilent grave; tis mine, lawfully mine."

"Figure to yourſelf, my dear Lady Sedley, our unſpeakable conſternation; for my part, all I wonder at is that the joyful ſurpriſe did not kill me; indeed I was for ſometime almoſt lifeleſs, and hardly heard what paſſed from that highly important moment 'till that in which I found myſelf again in the carriage, my father tenderly ſupporting me, Sir John and the young creature I have mentioned ſeated on the oppoſite ſide. All to me appeared a dream; I durſt hardly credit my ſenſes; I looked timidly around, but finding the deteſted Charles was not with us, began to be enough compoſed to truſt I was really awake.

"We

"We were ſet down at Sir John's; my father I found having agreed to ſpend the day with him, in order to talk over this ſtrange affair, and for that purpoſe had alſo brought home the angel, as I had good reaſon to call her, who had thus ſaved me from deſpair and miſery.

"When we had in ſome meaſure got over the ſurprife and acquired a tolerable degree of compoſure, the lady gave us the particulars of her unfortunate ſtory; but thoſe I ſhall reſerve 'till we meet, and only tell my dear friend that ſhe actually is, and has been his truly wretched wife near two years.

Judge what were poor Sir John's

ſenſations on having this wonderful circumſtance confirmed beyond all doubt; finding ſhe had been blameleſs, and had behaved under her misfortunes with a prudence, a reſignation, that few women I fear would have had the fortitude to do, Sir John, taking her tenderly by the hand, bid her be comforted, and from that moment look upon upon him as a father. She is of a good family, has loſt both her parents; and at the time ſhe became acquainted with the cruel wretch who has for ever deſtroyed her peace lived with an aunt.

"Ah! what a fickle, what an inſenſible wretch he muſt indeed be

who

who could thus abandon ſo lovely, ſo amiable a creature; for ſhe is truly ſo, my dear Lady Sedley, as I am ſure you will confeſs when acquainted with her, which you will ſoon be I hope, for I muſt have your permiſſion to introduce her when you come to town; and I am ſure you will not let it be very long before you give me the joy of ſeeing you; for I have much, very much to ſay, many things to tell you, many more than I can croud into a ſheet or two of paper.—Ten thouſand hopes —as many fears—O Lady Sedley, is it then in nature that Edmond may yet be mine! Was I to blame?—tell me freely. Yet ſurely I was not.

Could

Could I do leſs than make him a partaker in my preſent happineſs? I every moment expect to receive an anſwer filled with the genuine effuſions of his tender, his truly feeling heart. I now rejoice that my father is apprized of our mutual attachment: never, never ſhall I forget his aſtoniſhment when he ſo unexpectedly made the diſcovery, nor the guilty Charles's rage on finding a ſo juſtly favored rival in his brother. Heavens! with what contempt, what inſulting triumph did he look upon him when they with ſo much cruelty tore me from his arms; but I truſt he will ſoon triumph in his turn; yes ſoon, my dear friend; I

gueſs

gueſs ſo, from ſome kind words which my now truly affectionate father dropped on finding what a viper he had cheriſhed in his boſom. Perſuaded he has generouſly formed a deſign of this nature I ſhall leave the management of it wholly to himſelf; pretty certain I ſhall yet be moſt compleatly happy, I can patiently wait his time.

"I have once ſince the memorable day of days ſeen my lovely deliverer, and, as I have already told you, find her a moſt amiable and deſerving creature; 'tis our opinion, my father's and mine I mean, that Sir John intends inviting her to live with him; what indeed can he do

better?

better? I am ſure ſhe has it in her power, by her various accompliſhments, to render home more agreeable to him than he has by all accounts found it for ſome years; and I am certain it will be a pleaſing ſtudy to her to make him ſenſible of the agreeable change. In ſpite of the ſhocking treatment ſhe had met with, ſhe yet wiſhed to intercede with him in favour of his worthleſs ſon; but he ſtopped her at once, telling her he would patiently hear her on any ſubject except *that*; declaring it might never be touched upon unleſs he himſelf led to it. This was ſaid in ſo deciſive a manner that no reply could be made.

"My

"My father tells me the creature is going abroad; 'tis the very beſt thing he can do; for as to a reconciliation with his wife, 'tis out of the queſtion, even granting he wiſhed it, which I have no reaſon to believe; but ſhe I am certain would on no terms hear of it; and no wonder, my dear Lady Sedley, after the treatment ſhe has ſo undeſervedly met with.

"I vow were he *full* brother to the engaging Edmond, I ſhould have my fears; but he is not—they had different mothers. Ah! how very different are they themſelves. Adieu! my beloved friend; I truſt I ſhall have the pleaſure of ſeeing you in a day or two.

"Think

"Think how doubly fortunate I was in having the dreadful ceremony interrupted, without my intentions of doing it as I had propoſed being diſcovered; by this happy event my father remains ignorant of my premeditated diſobedience.

"Before I conclude this letter permit me to return you my hearty thanks for thoſe excellent books you have ſent me; but in a more particular manner for the four following ones, Lord Winworth, or the Memoirs of an Heir, Edward and Harriet, or the Happy Recovery, Sophia, or the Embarraſſed Wife, and Pleaſing Variety, containing ſix new novels; for as your ladyſhip

very

very juſtly obſerves, that for humor, delicacy, and ſentiment, they far exceed any publications that have appeared for many years, and I ſincerely join in wiſhing the publiſher (who I find lives in Duke's Court, St. Martin's Lane) every ſucceſs ſo valuable a collection deſerves, and think they ought to be read by every family in the kingdom.

"And now, my dear Lady Sedley, once more adieu! My beſt reſpects to Sir James, and believe me my dear Lady Sedley's ever affectionate

BELINDA MENNILL.

P.S. How

P. S. How Sir James and your ladyſhip are to get out of the ſcrape you got into by giving my father ſo pleaſant a ramble, heaven knows. Should he ever diſcover, I mean, that it was all a contrivance of your's; yet I now think he is in ſo good a humour, ſo delighted to reflect on my hair's breadth eſcape, that I abſolutely believe he would laugh heartily at it; but we will talk that matter over when we meet."

Edmond's ſenſations, while reading the few lines ſent him by his adored Belinda may be more eaſily imagined than deſcribed; they were thoſe of a lover; a thouſand times

he

he preſſed the paper to his lips, a thouſand times he read over the delightful, the aſtoniſhing contents.

She had ordered him to have patience—to take no ſtep towards ſeeing her till he heard from her again; this he was tempted to pronounce cruel, but checked himſelf, for well he knew his lovely Belinda was incapable of it. He endeavoured to obey without murmuring; how long he might have done ſo is uncertain, but to his infinite joy, the trial of his forbearance and reſignation was not ſo long as he feared it would have been. A letter from the father of his beloved, ſet his agitated heart at reſt, if one may

may pronounce a heart at reſt which the contents of it had thrown into the moſt violent emotions of joy. That my readers may with more eaſe be able to decide the queſtion, I will tranſcribe Mr. Mennill's letter for their peruſal.

MY

CHAP-

CHAPTER XVI.

TO EDMOND MAYNARD, ESQ.

MY eyes are opened—the firſt uſe I wiſh to make of them is to ſee you in Portland Place; at our laſt meeting I was blind—let that be my apology for not being able to diſtinguiſh a raſcal from a man of worth. If you, Edmond, are that man which a *friend of your's* has taken ſome pains to perſuade me you are, ſet off without loſs

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loſs of time; ſtrange things have happened. Your father and I have hitherto acted like a pair of old fools; we have ſeen our error, and that too before tis too late, which does not always happen to be the caſe.

Not a line from you to the friend above mentioned; mind I forbid that; I wiſh to give her a ſurpriſe; agreeable as I believe it will be, do not however flatter yourſelf it can equal that ſhe laſt met with. Set off inſtantly, and depend upon a welcome reception from

Your's,

EDWARD MENNILL.

If

If excefs of joy could kill, Edmond muft have died; he did not, therefore we have proved the aſſertion, that ſuch have occaſionally been its effects, falſe.

His carriage was at the door in leſs than an hour after he had received the tranſporting ſummons, and by three o'clock ſet him down at Mr. Mennill's door.

Belinda was at that moment ſitting in the drawing room with her father; he was reading a newſpaper, ſhe *Lord Winworth, or the Memoirs of an Heir*. A ſervant entered, announcing Mr. Edmond Maynard, who inſtantly followed. Belinda, ſtarting, threw down her book,

and

and was on the point of flying towards him, but checked herſelf, and turned her eyes on her father, in order to ſee by his looks what reception her lover was likely to meet with, believing he had diſobeyed her commands, and come unſent for.

Mr. Mennill gueſſed the cauſe of her embarraſſment, and ſmiling cried —"why, Belinda, is this the kindeſt welcome you have to beſtow on a friend of mine?"

"Oh, my dear Sir," ſaid his daughter, "how good, how——"

"Come, come, no more of this; let me ſee if you have yet *learned obedience?*" When taking the delighted

lighted Edmond by the hand, and leading him to his daughter, he added—"prove to me that you *have* by receiving this young man as the perſon I have made choice of for your huſband—let me have no whimpering, huſſy, no tears," continued he, in the ſame agreeable tone, "for I will be obeyed."

Edmond now took her unreluctant hand and preſſed it to his lips, with an expreſſion in his fine eyes which plainly told both father and daughter he thought himſelf the moſt fortunate and happieſt of men.

"Oh, Sir," cried the bluſhing Belinda, "how ſhall I ever repay

ſuch unbounded kindneſs, how thank you as I wiſh for this proof of your affection?"

"Why, my dear girl, the only way I can point out to you for that purpoſe," replied he, "is, I think, to forget I ever was leſs ſo."

Juſt at this happy moment, Sir John Maynard's coach ſtopped at the door. His ſurpriſe on finding Edmond already there, for he knew Mr. Mennill intended ſending for him, but did not imagine it would have been quite ſo ſoon, was nearly as great as Belinda's.

All was now harmony and heart-felt ſatisfaction. The day was paſſed in a manner infinitely more

pleaſing

pleaſing to the two fathers than any they had paſſed for many years, perhaps in their lives.

Lady Sedley and Sir James came to town next day; her ladyſhip went immediately to call upon her now happy friend. Their meeting was affectionately tender. After a thouſand kind congratulations on the unexpected change in Belinda's affairs—"but, my dear girl," ſaid Lady Sedley, "what ſhall I ſay to your father, how make my peace with him, ſhould he find out the wicked trick I played him? I abſolutely have not courage to ſee him, leſt his firſt queſtion ſhould be to aſk me for my neighbours

the *Selbys*; I ſhall die if he does, that's certain, and I fear 'tis no leſs certain he will. Yet after all, my dear Miſs Mennill, *I* did not preſs him to gallop off to Scarborough, Harrowgate, York, and the Lord knows where, *that* was his own doings."

"Indeed, indeed," cried Miſs Mennill, "your ladyſhip is in a woeful ſcrape; thank heaven one party concerned is no longer to be feared, he is otherwiſe diſpoſed of."

"Well but do tell me," ſaid her ladyſhip eagerly, "what ſhall I ſay, how ſhall I contrive to get out of it with a tolerable grace? upon my life I dread our meeting."

Scarce

Scarce had ſhe uttered theſe words when to her confuſion Mr. Mennill entered the room.

"I fear I interrupt your tete a tete," ſaid he, ſmiling. "Belinda I ſuppoſe, has been telling your ladyſhip ſhe has conquered, and is in a fair way to have her own way at laſt, in ſpite of all the trouble I have taken to prevent it. I confeſs ſhe is a fly gypſey, and has led her poor father a pretty dance. By the bye I have to thank your ladyſhip for part of it. A fine wildgooſe chaſe you ſent me to. I muſt have a long reckoning with you and Sir James about that confounded buſineſs. There did I gallop two or three hun-

dred miles after your neighbours the Selbys, but never could I overtake them. No great matter indeed, as you now know I ſuppoſe; for Sophy I find never even heard of them till I told her of my rambles; who the devil was it that told you ſhe was with them? you ſee it was all a lie."

"Will you promiſe, my dear Sir, to forgive me if I tell you the whole truth?" cried Lady Sedley, laying her hand upon his ſhoulder, and looking up in his face with a moſt bewitching ſmile.

"Hey day!" replied he, "what am I to gueſs by this ſly preface? Have you too, as well as herſelf, had a hand in the plot?"

"Not

"Not a word till you promiſe to forgive me," anſwered her ladyſhip. "I am not obliged to confeſs, you know, my good friend, but I own I long to unburthen my conſcience."

"So, ſo," cried Mr. Mennill, no wonder my girl had courage to diſpute my authority, ſince ſhe had the ſanction of a perſon whom ſhe is ſilly enough to look upon as a pattern of every perfection. Come out with it," continued he; "down upon your knees; let me have all the truth and nothing but the truth, and truſt to my mercy. Thank your ſtars I am not in the humour at preſent to be abſolutely inflexible."

"No wonder my dear Sir,"

ſaid her ladyſhip, "our Belinda never heard of the Selbys; for the fact is I am by no means certain any ſuch family ever exiſted."

"Not exiſt!" ſaid he in amaze; why they lived next door to you I thought."

Ah, Sir," cried ſhe.

"Come, come, I will not humble you too far," continued he ſmiling, ſince I find by that *ah Sir*, you ſhow ſome ſigns of true penitence. Well, and ſo you have the face to tell me that pretty ſtory was all a hum, have you?"

"I have indeed," replied Lady Sedley, affecting to dread his reſentment.

"And

"And you actually knew nothing about my daughter at that time?" ſaid he.

"O yes," replied ſhe, "full well I knew every thing about her; for inſtead of the Selbys, it was I myſelf who conveyed her away."

"You did?" cried Mr. Mennill. "Mighty well. Pray proceed; no ſtop: prithee before you go any farther tell me did that raſcal Charles Maynard, or did he not, ſee her at your houſe as he affirmed."

"He did indeed," replied ſhe.

"What the very night before, as he declared?"

"Yes, exactly ſo."

"She was with you at the time we called then, was she?"

"O no; she was by that time, my dear Sir, on the very spot where you found her."

"Why how the devil can that be?" cried he; just now you told me you yourself conveyed her away; take care, or you'll make a bungling story of it."

"Not at all, my dear Sir, if you will only encourage the poor culprit to proceed by a gracious smile now and then during her recital."

"Why with what a pair of pretty plotting gypseys have I had to deal all this time," said he. "Well, go on.

"Sir

"Sir James was the identical perſon your late favourite Charles——"

"O confound him!" exclaimed Mr. Mennill.

"He, I ſay," continued Lady Sedley, was the very perſon who was attacked by footpads; and ſo Sir, as Charles came to his relief, he could not do leſs than aſk him in that he might thank him at leiſure for the favor; and there Sir, to his moſt agreeable ſurpriſe, he found your daughter and me ſitting quietly, chatting, little expecting ſo unwelcome a gueſt. After this we concluded Wimpole ſtreet was no longer a place of ſafety. I ordered my poſt chaiſe, whipped into it with the dear girl,

ſet

ſet her down at my honeſt friend Thompſon's, and inſtantly returned to town in order to have the honor to receive your viſit the next day; which I made no doubt I ſhould be favored with in conſequence of the intelligence the amiable Charles would hardly fail to give you. This, Sir, is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, &c." and down ſhe dropped on her knee at his feet in a ſupplicating attitude.

He could not withſtand this; but raiſing her, laughed heartily at the contrivance, crying "why what a bugbear of a fellow muſt I be?"

"Pardon me there," cried her ladyſhip: 'twas not you, my dear Sir, from

from whom we fled, but your vile companion."

"Thank you," ſaid he, "thank you for that happy turn. So I am to forgive you both am I?"

"If you pleaſe," cried the ladies, each taking a hand, curtſying, and ſmiling in his face.

"Well, if I muſt, I muſt," cried Mr. Mennill; "but I had a curſed jaunt of it for all that."

"Nay I vow," cried Lady Sedley, "I deſerve a handſome fee for that preſcription; it has done you a world of good, has n't it, my dear Belinda? Did you ever ſee Mr. Mennill look ſo well?"

"And

"And you prescribed it merely for the benefit of my health," said he, "did you," [an arch look.]

After chatting a while in this agreeable manner, Lady Sedley took her leave; having first promised Sir James and herself would dine with them the next day, on condition Edmond should be of the party, as she was impatient to be introduced to him. Belinda begged she would come some hours before dinner, as she wanted to go a shopping, and had many things to say to her.

Sir John Maynard, his son Edmond, and poor Mrs. Maynard, met

met Sir James and Lady Sedley at Mr. Mennill's the following day about five o'clock. The only bar to their happineſs was a recollection of paſt ſcenes; however nothing was ſaid by any of them likely to damp the pleaſure of the party; even the unfortunate wife endeavoured to forget her ſorrows, and by an amiable chearfulneſs contribute all ſhe could to promote it.

"What a divine fellow!" whiſpered Lady Sedley to Belinda when Edmond entered the room. "I never beheld ſo fine a figure; is it poſſible he can be as inſenſible of it as you would perſuade me?"

"Wait till the day is over, replied

plied her happy friend, "then tell me whether you have any remaining doubts?

After dinner the ladies retired to the drawing room, where they were ſoon followed by the gentlemen, and various plans were formed for the evening.

"Pray my good friend," ſaid Lady Sedley, where can we be happier than we are in this very room? do not let us, like too many of the world, give up the ſubſtance for the ſhadow."

So ſaying, ſhe went to the harpſichord, deſiring Belinda would ſing her favorite ſong. This ſhe did without preſſing or affecting to

have

have a violent cold. Edmond, the delighted Edmond alſo took a part, they ſoon formed an agreeable though unpremedidated concert, and unanimouſly agreed Lady Sedley was right."

Before they parted, Sir John taking his daughter Belinda's hand, ſaid, "you have from the moment I entered the houſe ſo agreeably engaged my attention my lovely girl, that I had very near left it without mentioning my chief motive for paying my reſpects to you, perhaps Edmond may not have been quite ſo negligent."

"Pray, ſaid the bluſhing Belinda," what can it be? ſure I am, I find nothing

thing to accuſe you of. Sir John Maynard I fancy is not apt to be to wanting in every proper attention.

"And yet I certainly have on this occaſion," "replied he ſmiling, for I have not yet aſked when you will do me the honour to be of a party I propoſed making to St. George's Church."

"Oh not St. George's, exclaimed poor Belinda involuntarily recollecting the ſcene which had ſo lately paſſed there."

"Very well my dear girl, cried Sir John, it ſhall not be there then. you have no other objection I truſt, and ſo my good friends," continued he ſmiling, "I invite you all to breakfaſt with me on Tueſday next, from

from thence we will go to the firſt church we meet with, have a little chat with the clergyman, and return to dinner."

"Heavens Sir John, on Tueſday next, what do you mean."

"O my meaning, I give you my honor my dear Miſs Mennell is perfectly innocent; all I propoſe is to make you the happieſt wife in England, that's all; now I'll be judged by this company, whether they can reaſonably offer any objections to my plan."

They all ſmiled.

"*I do*, cryed Lady Sedly, yes, I poſitively do object;" you now truly fancy you are to have every thing your

your own way. Belinda is wholly under my command, nor dare ſhe murmur at any I do her the honor to lay upon her; I repeat, it *ſhall not* be Tueſday, but, looking ſweetly on her agitated friend, but—Wedneſday. They ſhant have all their own way, ſhall they my dear girl?"

Edmond now took her ladyſhip's hand and preſſing it to his lips, *looked* his gratitude."

Belinda cried, "how can you my dear friend talk in that unthinking manner, upon my word I did not expect?"

"To follow my example *quite ſo ſoon*, I preſume you were going to

ſay,

ſay my dear, ſaid Lady Sedly, ſmiling, but pray what have I to do with your expectations? on Wedneſday then," continued ſhe turning to Sir John, "you may depend upon our being with you by ten o'clock. So good night—leave me to ſettle the buſineſs with this ſilly girl."

Edmond again preſſed her hand with looks of gratitude, then turning to Belinda—"may I, my amiable Miſs Mennill, flatter myſelf that I ſhall not owe my felicity wholly to the arbitrary commands of my charming advocate?"

"Indeed I hardly know a word you have been ſaying," replied ſhe with

with a moſt engaging ſmile; you are a teizing ſet of beings; however when I have leiſure I will conſider how far you are obliged to my ſaucy friend who preſumes thus to tyrannize over me; if you do not find me of the party on Wedneſday, you have only to conclude her boaſted authority is not quite ſo great as ſhe is pleaſed to ſuppoſe."

He took her unreluctant hand, preſſed it to his heart, and gazing on her with unſpeakable tenderneſs, followed his father, who, repeating the invitation, took his leave. Sir James and Lady Sedley ſoon did ſo likewiſe, the latter promiſing

miſing to be with her friend early in the morning.

She kept her word. The appointed day at length arrived.

I might now, my fair readers, treat you with a thouſand particulars; ſuch as, how the lovely girl looked, how ſhe was dreſſed, of her palpitations, her emotions, &c. but truſt all theſe kind of matters have on ſimilar occaſions been ſo amply deſcribed by other hiſtorians, that you will readily forgive me if I ſpare both you and myſelf that trouble. Suffice it to ſay, that ſhe was led to church in the character of Miſs Mennill, and returned from

it

it in that of Mrs. Maynard, fully perſuaded there was not a happier woman than herſelf in the three kingdoms.

FINIS